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WIZARD®

THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 68

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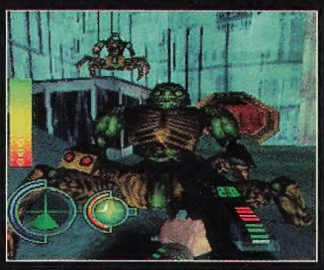

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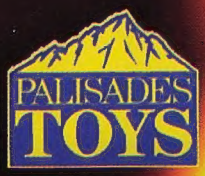

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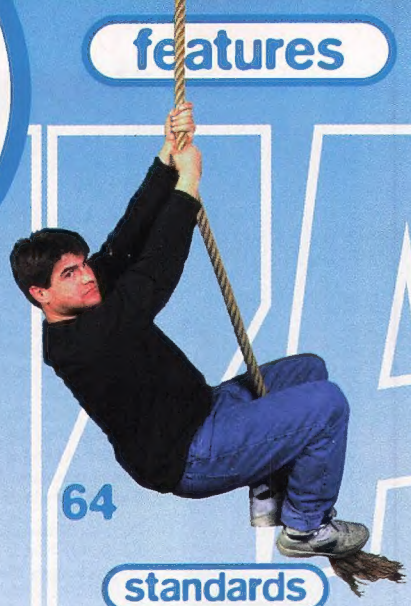
After his onslaught on X-Men, Andy Kubert swings onto *Ka-Zar*, hoping fans will follow. By Matthew Senreich



64

ON THE COVER
X-Man was illustrated by Roger Cruz and Wellington Dias, and colored by Twilight Graphics. To learn X-Man's convoluted life story, grab some aspirin and flip to page 34.

Superman was illustrated by Stuart Immonen and José Marzan Jr., and colored by Patrick Martin. Turn to page 56 to find out if revamping Superman is worth all the hubbub.

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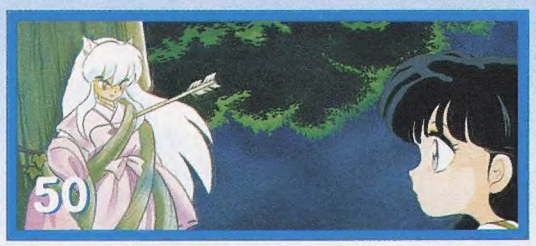

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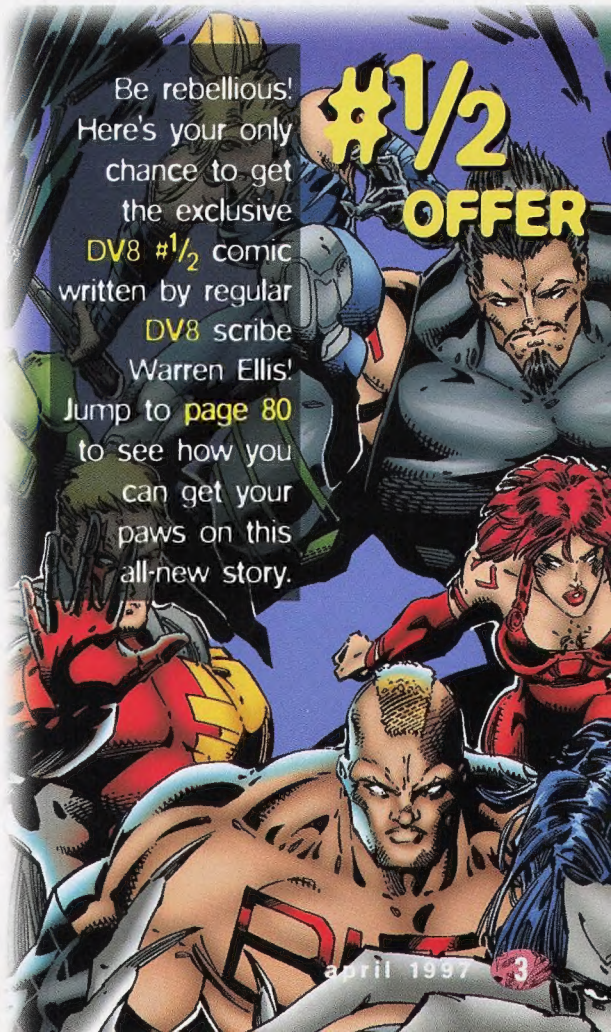
Draw your favorite Marvel hero on Zabu's back, and win yourself an original Andy Kubert page from the new *Ka-Zar* series!

102 GRAPHITTI DESIGNS
Pick your brain and win an avalanche o' neato-keen comic merchandise like T-shirts, pins, mugs, hardcovers and more!

129 GUNSMITH CATS
Here's your chance to win an original Kenichi Sonoda *Gunsmith Cats* sketch. Mwwrrrrow!

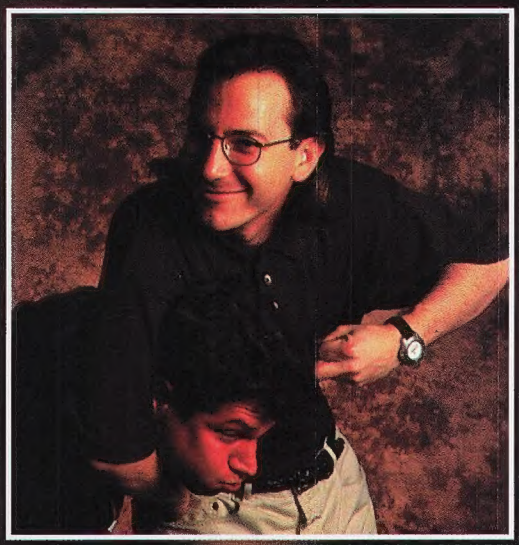
138 ONSLAUGHT TOYS
Holy jealousy! Win an Onslaught collection of Toy Biz toys, including a one-of-a-kind Professor X Onslaught figure!!!

EXCLUSIVE



Be rebellious! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive DV8 #1/2 comic written by regular DV8 scribe Warren Ellis! Jump to page 80 to see how you can get your paws on this all-new story.

"HOW ABOUT A NICE KNUCKLE SAMMICH?"



CHANGING UNDERWEAR

The debate rages on! To change or not to change Superman's costume...well, it's done, and we'll have your thoughts on the new costume and powers in this issue. I read many interviews in newspapers and around the country regarding the costume changes. Of the approximately 60 or 70 people interviewed, only three were kids. Everyone else was either a Ph.D., psychologist or retailer trying to analyze the future world implications of this event. Well, like I always say, "Good or bad publicity, just spell my name correctly." (I stole that line, by the way.)

This is a big month for me—the biggest thing is that I'm getting married to the lovely and talented Ms. Lisa Geisenheimer, whose last name will not be cut in half. So I'm very excited—I'll make sure that you see pictures (of the wedding, not the honeymoon). I'll be going away for two weeks, so *sayonara*. And no bachelor party pictures either...

We are also officially announcing that we will be launching a monthly toy magazine called, you guessed it, *ToyFare*. Since the first Special we did got such a great response, in April we're doing another Special with an exclusive and limited Kitty Pride figure offer. And in July, the first monthly issue will come out. It's the kind of magazine I wish I had growing up. I know you're gonna love it.

This issue of *Wizard* has lots of great stuff packed in. *The Darkness* is on fire—so we've got a really great Darkness Chrome card. Also, the *Gen13* spin-off, *DV8*, has been making some waves in the industry, so make sure you pick up the #1/2 issue offer. You will be sorry if you miss it!

We also have an important news item regarding the Marvel bankruptcy in this issue. It isn't a typical bankruptcy, and there's no planned interruption in the flow of comic books from Marvel. So read up so you understand exactly what's going on.

Until next month—cheers!

Gareb S. Shamus

ABC MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN APPLIED FOR

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Assistant Price Guide Editor Phil Colligan
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Administrative Assistant Jennifer Cavallo

Design Manager Steve Blackwell
Designer Arlene So
Contributing Designers Chris Duncan, Ryan Dunlavey, Cynthia Emmert, Robin Ramos, Suddenly Chadwick! Design, Voltage Design Co.
Art Assistant Daniel Reilly
Shocking Ending of the Month The last page of *Thunderbolts* #1

Contributors Brian Douglas Ahern, Dan Albaugh, Rob Allstetter, Conrad Bain, Sorrell Booke, David Borak, Matthew Brady, Steve Brown, Chuck Dixon, Mikey "The Knife" Fasolo, Carl Horn, Craig Kostelecky, John B. Lacey, Andy Lee, Michael O'Connell, Tom Palmer Jr., Tom Russo, Michael Searle, Marc Shapiro, Craig Shutt, Joyce Steel, Adam Warren

Superman Art
Stuart Immonen and José Marzan Jr., colored by Patrick Martin
X-Man Art
Roger Cruz and Wellington Dias, colored by Twilight Graphics

Wizard Press
President/Publisher Gareb S. Shamus
Executive VP Fred Pierce
VP Finance Edward L. DuPré
Executive Assistant Martha Donato
Production Director Helene Dubrowsky
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Online Editor Buddy Scalera
Office Manager Brenda Cook
Warehouse Manager Gedalias Donato

Customer Service (914) 268-3594

Foreign Licensing Marty Stever
Fax: (312) 955-7702
Advertising
Group Advertising Director James D'Adamo
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Stuff you don't ever read...
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ONE NAME. ONE UNIVERSE. ONE MORE TIME.

SPIDER-BOY TEAM-UP #1

It was only a matter of time! The Arich-Kid meets the Legion of Galactic Guardians of 2099!

SUPER SOLDIER: MAN OF WAR #1

With the help of Sgt. Rock and his Howling Commandoes, our heroes face Major Zemo and the return of the War Wheel!

ON SALE IN APRIL

BAT-THING #1

CHALLENGERS OF THE FANTASTIC #1

GENERATION HEX #1

IRON LANTERN #1

AND DON'T MISS ANY OF THESE OTHER CLASSICS-IN-THE-MAKING:

• THE EXCITING X-PATROL • THORION OF THE NEW ASGODS •
• MAGNETIC MEN FEATURING MAGNETO • LOBO THE DUCK •
• JLX UNLEASHED • THE DARK CLAW ADVENTURES •

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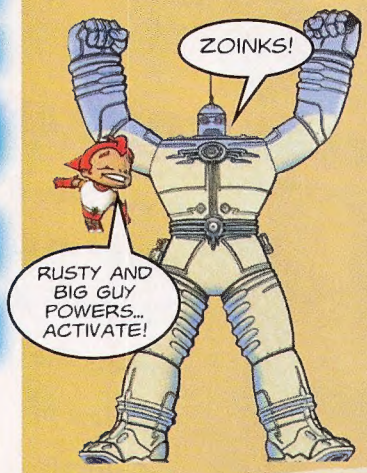
MAGIC WORDS

Guest Star Extravaganza

We've got about 53 assorted comic questions to delve into this month, and we're going straight to the horses' mouths for most of the replies. So read carefully—you're bound to find a favorite comic writer, artist or editor guest-starring with some answers.

Oh, yeah—we start out with a couple of the inevitable "letters about letters," including one from a guy who's probably one of your favorite comic sales and marketing guys, even though you don't know his name...



Hey Jim,

I saw Mark Estrella's letter about the Super Friends in *Wizard* #65 and thought I'd throw a "fun fact" at ya! Many of the machines and monsters in the old "Super Friends" cartoons were designed by none other than Geof Darrow, artist of *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot!* Geof also did designs for "Scooby Doo" and "Richie Rich" cartoons.

Check out *Big Guy and Rusty* for a good look at Geof's amazingly detailed artwork and see how much the guys who did "Super Friends" must have hated him. All that detail—he's sick!

Lou Bank
Dark Horse Comics
Milwaukie, OR

Fans of Darrow may want to check out* The Art of Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot, *a black-and-white, 25% larger version of the original series without word balloons or color, designed to focus on Geof's amazing art. It's chock-full o' Darrow goodness.

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

I'm writing in response to issue #64's "Bunny Award" letter. I largely agreed with most of the "dream team" writers and artists you and Matt Reck picked for your books, except for the writer which both of you picked for *Batman*. No disrespect intended to Frank Miller, but if you want constantly cool Bat-stories, then you'll find none better than Denny O'Neil. He wrote some of the most entertaining Batman stories ever told, and he would still have a field day today.

Bob Shamberger
McKinleyville, CA

Denny O'Neil, who's currently writing the monthly* Azrael *for DC Comics, says, "Thanks, Bob. I've always had a lot of fun writing Batman and I'll be doing my part to keep the streets of Gotham safe by writing the occasional Batman story or two in the future. Keep your eyes open for them."

Dear Jim,

Whaddaya mean tattoos couldn't have been around before needles and ink? How do you think all those tribesmen on the Discovery Channel got theirs? Went down to the nearest tattoo parlor and traded a banana for a wicked tribal marking? I think not. Tattoos, in fact, have been around since the dawn of time!

Anything sharp (thorns, sharp twigs, arrowheads, bone fragments) can be used to make tattooing incisions in the pattern of choice. Then ashes or soot are rubbed into the wound while it is still bleeding and it is allowed to heal. When the scab falls off, you have a neato-keen tribal marking. That's how it was done before the domestication of the dog, or needles and ink.

Rina Aarons
Fountain Valley, CA
Rhianon12@aol.com

Dear Spirit of Nick Fury, benevolent force that guides us all, give me the strength to deal with these people.

Can we please get one thing—JUST ONE LITTLE THING!—straight here? Tattoos have not been around since the dawn of time! At the dawn of time (And I don't care if you subscribe to Biblical or scientific theory. Either way, it works.), there were no people! Therefore, no people to invent the tattoo! No people to get tattooed! Understand?

Yes, I know all you little tattoo people just love your tattoos. Yes, I got your letters with wonderful dissertations on the history of tattooing, including some where people told me that branding

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

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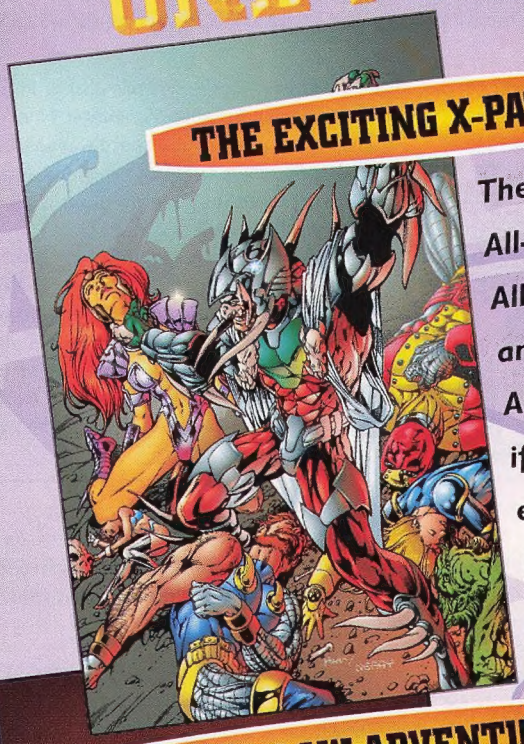
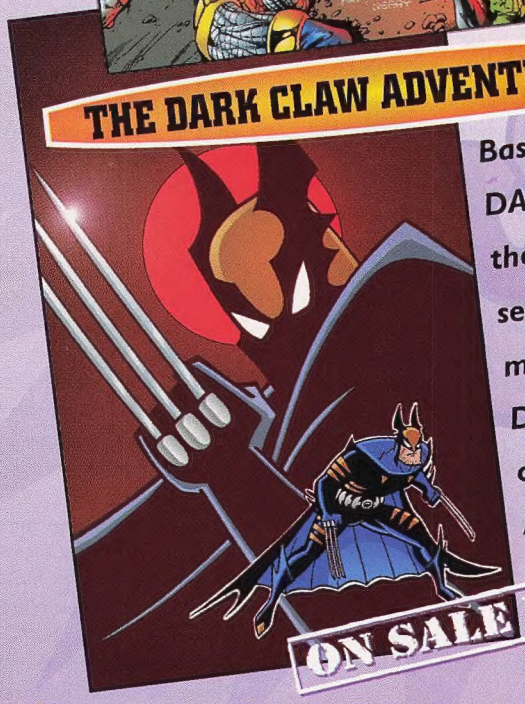


THE EXCITING X-PATROL #1

They're All-New, All-Different, and All-Doomed if they can't escape the Brood Pit!



THE DARK CLAW ADVENTURES #1

Based on DARK CLAW: the Animated series; Dark Claw meets the Daughter of Ra's A-Pocalypse!

ON SALE IN APRIL

JLX UNLEASHED #1

THORION OF THE NEW ASGODS #1

LOBO THE DUCK #1

MAGNETIC MEN FEATURING MAGNETO #1

AND DON'T MISS ANY OF THESE OTHER CLASSICS-IN-THE-MAKING:
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• IRON LANTERN •

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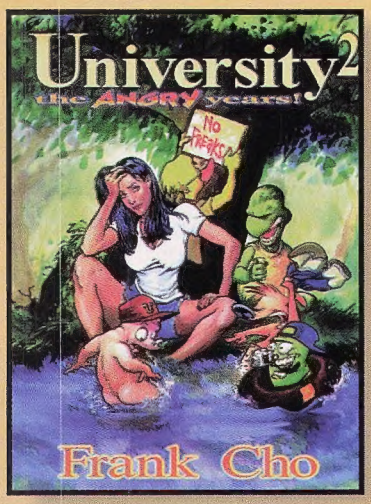
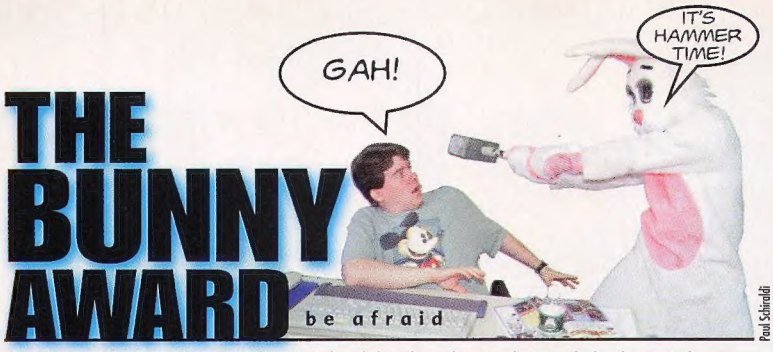
(Gee! That sounds real civilized. Good for cattle? Good for people!) is an acceptable, and even older, form of tattooing. But I don't care how damn old it is, NOTHING IS AS OLD AS THAN THE DAWN OF TIME! Can we just agree on this? Good. Now leave me alone.

On to something more relevant...



THE BUNNY AWARD

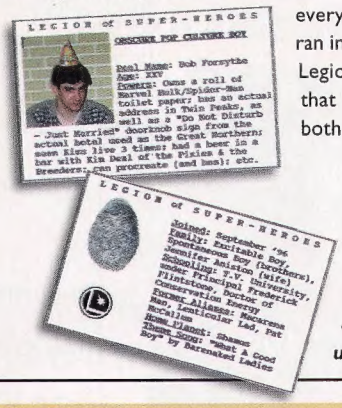
be afraid



Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Jimbo,

Howdy! I finally realized that I didn't have Bobby Drake's chance in Hell of getting everything for your "Scavenger Hunt" contest that ran in issue #62. However, I was so pleased with this Legion of Super-Heroes membership card I made, that I thought you might enjoy it. Be sure to read both sides, too.



Bob Forsythe
Parma, OH

Hey, that's good craftsmanship. Based on your card alone, I'd say you already qualify for membership in the Legion of Substitute-Heroes. And who knows? If Cosmic Boy goes on the injured reserve, maybe you'll be called up to the majors.

Magic Words,

I have a problem that I hope you can help me with. I am a retailer who opened a store in October, 1996 and I can't always take chances when ordering small press stuff. But I took a risk and ordered Frank Cho's *University*^{2} book. I only ordered two copies and those lasted a whole 20 minutes before they sold! Like a good comic retailer, I called to reorder from my distributor, but they told me that they were out and had to put my order on back-order. So my question: Does Frank Cho have any plans to go into a second printing with his hilarious book? For a $12.95 comic strip collection, it got a great reaction. And I've got a line of people that want it, but can't get it.

Dave Elliott
Fayetteville, GA

The lovely and talented Frank Cho has this to say: "Boy, I've been hearing this one a lot lately. Anyone looking for* University^2 *who can't get it at their comic store can order directly from me. Write to: 12 Angry Monkeys, c/o Insight Studios, 7844 St. Thomas Dr., Baltimore, MD 21236. And tell me Wizard sent you.

"Oh, yeah, Jim—you might also want to mention that new strips by me entitled 'Liberty Meadows' will be making their debut in newspapers nationally in April of '97."

Hey Jim,

No offense to Mister...uhh...umm...Mister "Tron•," I guess, but why in the hell would someone name themselves "D-Tron•"? Why? That's pretty darned screwy.

Hell, if I offend him, what do I care? What's he gonna do? Ink me to death?

James Hoffler
Usagi21@aol.com

We asked Mr....uhh...umm...Mr. "Tron•," I guess, and he said:

"The D-Tron•2000 is an artificial intelligence/embellishing program used by Top Cow Productions. This unit is comprised of six sub-computers know collectively as 'Team Tron." D-Tron•2000 has an astounding page-per-minute inking output, can ink in any style, never gripes about deadlines, and is slowly assimilating all inkers in the comic business. James, if you are an inker, beware: Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated."

As to what all that means, I have no damn idea.

Dear Magic Words,

What is Claudio Castellini working on these days? The last time I saw his work was on *Marvel vs. DC.*

Sam Sellers
Chico, CA

He's working on a* Conan *mini-series for Marvel, slated to hit this May. While you're waiting, check out the* Silver Surfer: Dangerous Artifacts *book he did with writer Ron Marz last year—it's spiffy.

Dear Mr. Wizard Guy,

I'm wondering if you can answer a couple of questions about Joe Madureira for me:

1) How many more *Uncanny X-Men* issues is he planning on doing? I hope he does them forever!

2) How is it possible to get in contact with him in order to get his autograph?

3) How tall is he?

4) What kind of music does he like?

5) How do you pronounce his name?

6) Does he eat Rice Krispies Treats?

7) How can I be more like him?

Pat Dougherty
Earleville, MD

I can't give you the answers, so I figured I'd go straight to Joe Madureira himself. Joe says:

1) "Thanks. I see myself doing* Uncanny *until I feel I can't do anything more with the characters. But definitely for the near future, I'm on the book."

2) "Write to me care of Marvel and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Assuming I get it—and it usually takes a while—I'll definitely sign a comic for you and send it back." That Marvel address is: 387 Park Ave. S., New York,

NY 10016.

3) "I'm about 5'11"."

4) "Everything. I listen to punk and hardcore. I'll listen to classical. It all depends on what kind of mood I'm in."

5) "It's pronounced 'mad-a-rare-uh.' Say it loud, say it proud!"

6) "No way. Cocoa Pebbles! It's the only way to go. I've been consuming mass quantities of them lately. I hadn't eaten them since I was a kid, but I've just re-discovered them."

7) "Listen to all kinds of music and avoid Rice Krispies Treats. And draw the X-Men, I guess."

Dear Magic Words,

1) Is Catwoman a hero or a villain?

2) How come whenever I try to sell my cards or comics, I can never get full value, even though they're in mint condition?

3) How come Saturday morning cartoons never stay true to the comics they're based on?

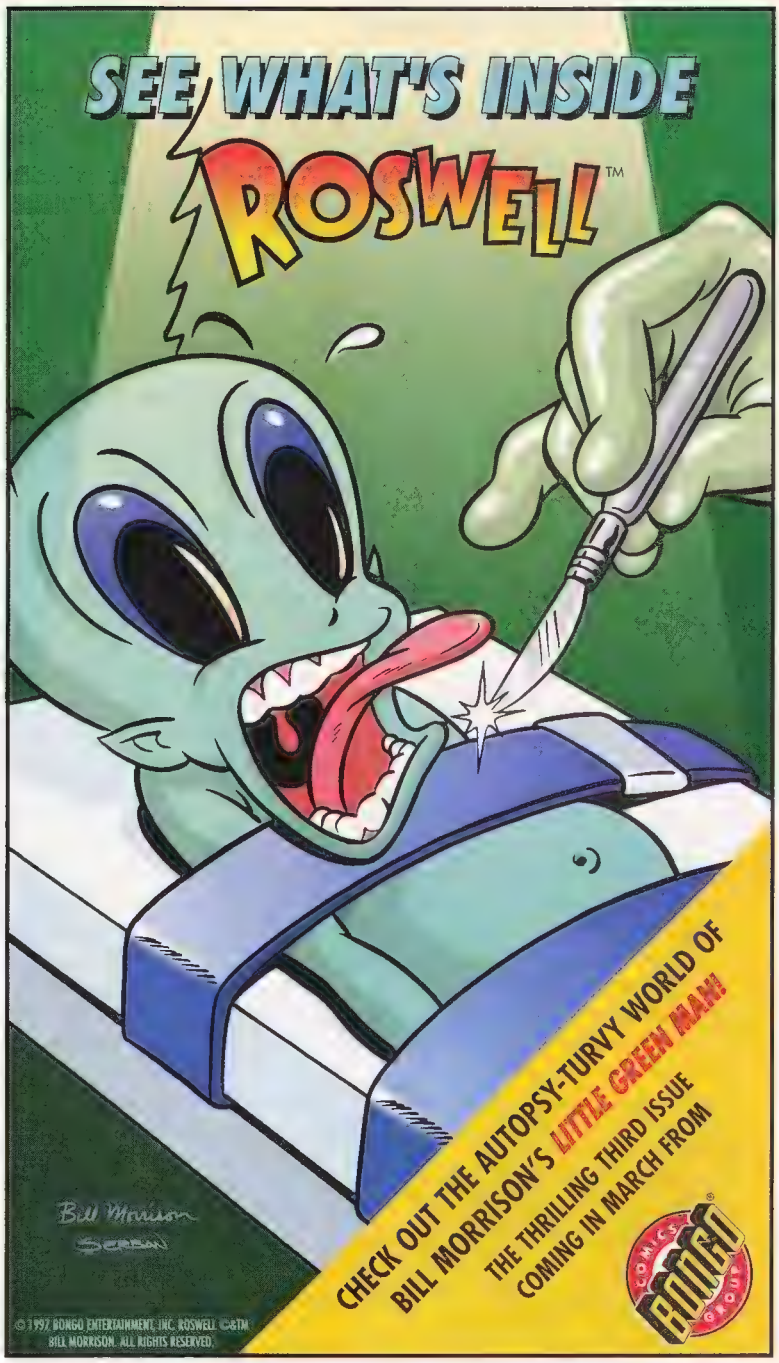
4) Is it okay for girls like me to buy comics like *Lady Death* or *Vampirella?*

5) Do any comic companies sponsor a stock car?

Stacy Tucker
Coal City, WV

1) Jim Balent, penciler of the monthly **Catwoman** *title, tells us that "Catwoman is a thief, so in the eyes of the law, she's viewed as a villainess. But in the eyes of her fans (and I'm one of 'em), she's a heroine. Her heart is filled with kindness and compassion. But like a cat, if you stroke her the wrong way, she'll strike back."*

2) The prices you see in any price guides are retail prices. Retailers buy at a price lower than retail to be able to sell at those price guide prices. Therefore, you can't get retail, 'cause retailers would have to sell at a price higher than retail if you did, and all the little price-guide heads wouldn't buy anything at those prices because it's higher than what it says in the price



Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on the last page of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your info to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").

PEN PALS

Tina Racinez
Age: 18 Sex: Female
523 Warren Street
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076-1922
Likes: *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac, Wolverine, The X-Files*

Chris Snyder
Age: 12 Sex: Male
6723 Wadsworth Rd.
Medina, OH 44256
Likes: X-titles, Spider-titles, *Wolverine*

Logan Lee
Age: 14 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 1142
Brentwood, TN 37024
Likes: *Bone, The Tick*, all Bongo titles

Jessica Carpenter
Age: 15 Sex: Female
2304 Lantern Ln. East
Mobile, AL 36693-3663
Likes: Chess, geeks, "Star Wars"

Andrew Molleur
Age: 15 Sex: Male
7 Hutchinson Ave.
Concord, NH 03301
Likes: X-titles, *Gen13*, *Wolverine*

Amber Love
Age: 16 Sex: Female
P.O. Box 4464
Covina, CA 91723
Likes: most X-titles, most manga, most anime

Craig Holmes
Age: 23 Sex: Male
28 Duke Street
Kingaroy Q 4610
Australia
Likes: *GL, Legion of S.H.*, manga

guide. See the vicious circle? Good. Now you can stop worrying about it. Have a popsicle. Kick back. Relax.

3) Why should they? There are maybe half a million regular comic readers, tops. There are many, many millions of TV viewers. Why play to the smaller audience? Television wants to appeal to as many people as possible.

4) Amanda Conner, who was a girl last time we checked, and who is also the artist on Vengeance of Vampirella *and thus able to give a qualified opinion, says, "Stacy, read whatever you like! Remember, you're always gonna find people who love nothing more than to wag their finger at you and tell you what's good and bad. You may be getting pressure from other girls not to read comics. But you wouldn't let any guy tell you what you should and shouldn't do, right? So you don't have to let girls tell you what you should and shouldn't do, either.*

"Make up your own mind. There are so few girls into comics that none should ever be discouraged. Believe it or not, there are other girls out there. I'm one of 'em!"

5) Yep. The Marvel/Toy Biz "Racing for Kids" car sports Spider-Man on the hood and the Hulk on the trunk of the car. Look for it in the 1997 NASCAR Winston Cup series.

Dear Wizard,

Who would win in a fight: pre-"Onslaught" Captain America or "Heroes Reborn" Captain America?

Jon Lennon
Batavia, IA

"Jon Lennon." Oooh, that's gotta be tough.

Anyhoo, there's two schools of thought on this one. John Cerilli, big PR goombah at the House of Ideas, says, "It's the same guy, different universes. So it's gotta be a tie." However, Rob Liefeld, current plotter and penciler of Captain America, *says, "The 'Heroes Reborn' Captain America! The second time around, we used a stronger super-soldier serum. What else would you expect?"*

Hey Big Jim,

What's up? I'll make this quick so you can go back to drinking and forget this letter:

1) What's Alex Ross up to these days, besides *Astro City* covers?

2) What's up over at Event Comics? Is anything new coming out? Do you know when the "Ash" animated movie will be premiering?

Jim Demonakos
Mukilteo, WA

Not a lot's up. Here's some answers:

1) About six-foot-three! Hoo-hah, am I funny! Damn, but I love them set-ups! But seriously, folks, he is a pretty tall guy.

Anyhoo, I called Alex, who said, "Well, there's the Uncle Sam *Vertigo two-issue series in late, late '97. And there's also 12 pages worth of new* Kingdom Come *material for the hardcover collections. There's four new pages in the middle and a new eight-page epilogue. But I will not be involved in* Kingdom, *the new monthly that serves as the prequel to* Kingdom Come."

2) We asked Event honcho Jimmy Palmiotti, who said, "We've got a six-issue Ash *mini-series by Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos and myself that starts in May, and an* Ash #1/2 *book in* Wizard #70 *the same month. The #1/2 issue is by Waid, James Robinson, Humberto, Joe Quesada and me. It contains a sneak preview of* Painkiller Jane, *a* 22 Brides *spinoff by Waid and Rick Leonardi which starts in June.*

"About the motion picture, all we can say right now is that production has started. We'll be making announcements through Wizard, *so keep reading."*

G'day, Wizard,

Can you answer me these questions, please?

1) How is it possible for Superboy to have a pierced ear? Isn't he invulnerable or something?

2) Am I right in thinking that Bad Girls are the opposite of good guys?

3) Who shot the sheriff?

4) How do you stand the Violator figure up?

5) How long does Chris Bachalo plan on staying with *Generation X*? He is the only artist that does that title how it should be done!

6) Lady Death vs. Spawn. Could it be possible?

7) I have a cool idea for a hero. His name is Backdraft and he has the power to create gale-force winds from his butt. What do you think?

Well, that's all from me. 'Bye now.

Gareth Evans
gevans@taunet.net.au

I can answer you these questions.

1) Well, Superboy's invulnerability is shaky at best. It's more like he's just pretty damn tough, not truly invulnerable. According to DC Comics' Maureen McTigue, the clone that is Superboy "popped out of a S.T.A.R. Labs pod with an earring." The very first time we see Superboy, in Adventures of Superman #500, *he is sportin' an earring.*

2) No. The Dallas Cowboys are the opposite of good guys.

3) I shot the sheriff. But I did not shoot the deputy.

4) Easy. You make a date with him, then cancel it at the last minute without telling him. He'll be sitting there, bouquet of roses in hand, wearing some ill-fitting suit, looking like a dork at some fancy-schmantzy restaurant. Then, before

PENPALS

Keith Rigsby
Age: 22 Sex: Male
Apt. #205
339 13th Ave. SW
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2R 0K3
Likes: *Generation X, Tarzan*

Jairus Davis
Age: 17 Sex: Male
1642 N. Austin
Chicago, IL 60639
Likes: *The Crow, X-Men, Supreme*

Derecus Slade
Age: 17 Sex: Male
127 W. Peterson St.
Edenton, NC 27932
Likes: Japanese comics & animation, X-titles, Homage titles

James Spencer Allen, Jr.
Age: 18 Sex: Male
5201 Denwood Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21206
Likes: X-titles, *Spawn*

WildStorm titles
Josh Lindemann, 18/m
jlindem@canuck.com
GL, all X-titles, *Spider-Man*

Chris Laugesen, 17/m
B246LAUGESEN@wchsnet.pvt.k12.in.us
Cyberforce, Darkchylde, Iron Man

Mike Neiswender, 22/m
JEDIKNTE@aol.com
Lady Death, Dawn, Star Wars

Shawn Davis, 17/m
Bandit36@Freemark.com
X-Force, Gen[13], Supergirl

Beau Ufen, 13/m
Joeufen@Buttenet.com
Generation X, X-Man, Fantastic Four

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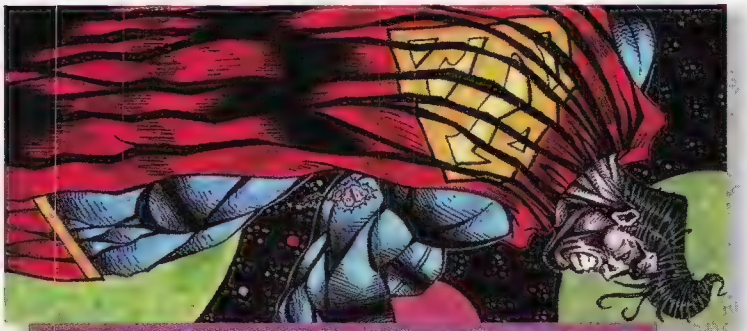
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive an issue of *Superman: The Man of Steel* autographed by Jon Bogdanove, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, a snazzy *Wizard* T-shirt and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the signed comic, issue, shirt and cap, plus a piece of original Superman vs. Steel art by Bogdanove! (Thanks for the goodies, Jon!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

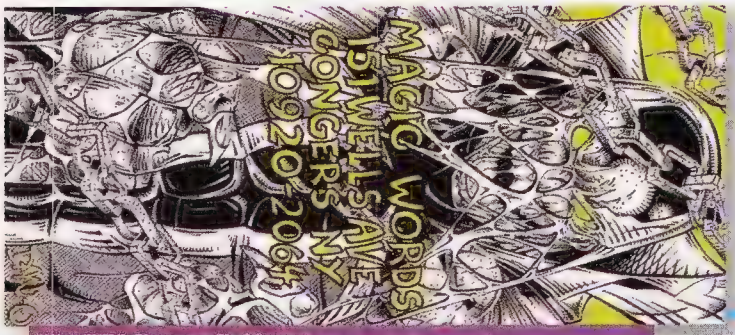
THE PRIZE

envelope of the month

HAPPY B-DAY, ERNIE Tina Racinez Scotch Plains, NJ



SUPERMAN IN SPACE Bart Rivera Jr. Brooklyn, NY



SPAWN Danny Goldman Orange Park, FL

DIAL 'M' FOR MONKEY Jared Bernard Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

we're in the home stretch...

he finds out you've stood him up, run.

5) Chris says thanks. He also says, "For the next six months, which takes us through about #31, I'm definitely working on Generation X. After that, the Magic 8-ball is a bit fuzzy."

6) Well, according to Lady Death creator Brian Pulido: "I'm fairly reluctant to do crossovers, but I must admit that there's a little piece of me that would probably consider Lady Death and Spawn. But I would only do it under the condition that I arm-wrestle Todd McFarlane, with the winner of the match choosing which character would win the battle. My money's on the Lady."

But Spawn creator Todd McFarlane, who could finally be reached for comment, said, "No. Because the next Spawn crossover will be huge. Huge. And people will just have to figure out what that means."

7) I think no. No, you don't have a cool idea for a hero. (But it would make a good villain, as Backfire in Savage Dragon can attest. Only he makes explosions from passing wind.)

Well, that's all from me, too. 'Bye.

Dear Wizard,

Is it true that a book looses its value if signed by an artist, inker, colorer or writer?

Iris N. Torres
Elizabeth, NJ

Yeah, it gets loose. But if that happens, you just tighten it up with a crescent wrench and it's as good as new.

Dear Wizard People,

I just have one thing to say: I hate golf.

Anton "Biff" Downey
Livingston, MT

Let me tell you all one thing: When a man from Montana named "Biff" talks, you'd best listen. Golf sucks.

That's all for now. See ya. I'm going bowling with Biff. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin will drink 30-weight motor oil and Bombay gin and he'll sleep when he's dead!

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MARVEL COMICS

Marvel's Summer Crossover 'No Exit' Puts the X-MEN ON THE RUN

If you thought the X-Men's lives were tough so far, wait'll you see this summer's big X-crossover.

"Imagine 'The Fugitive' with mutants, and multiply that by [a factor of] 20 for intensity," said **Scott Lobdell**, writer of *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*. "The crossover is going to have all the mutants in the Marvel Universe on the run."

According to Marvel, the X-crossover will begin in June and last for two to three months. The mutant **Bastion** will play as the focal point to this summer's crossover event currently being called "No Exit." "It's going to be the big payoff to the whole Bastion story," said John Cerilli, junior publicist at Marvel. "By the end, most X-teams will have evolved into something different than they are now."

"This story will result in a major shake-up, not unlike what happened five years ago with the introduction of *X-Force*, the new direction of *X-Factor* and the launching of *X-Men*," said Lobdell. "We're going for something of that caliber, so we're looking at a serious restructuring of all the X-books."

The crossover will revolve around the anti-mutant sentiments flaring in the Marvel Universe since the assassination of Presidential Candidate **Graydon Creed**. When the X-Men return from their recent exploits in Hong Kong, they'll find that Creed has become a martyr, resulting in a rallying cry for the human race to mobilize against mutants. With that premise, an international organization called Operation Zero Tolerance will hunt down all mutants, leaving them with no place to hide. "The idea is that they'll keep coming and coming after the X-Men until they nail every last one of them," said Lobdell. "The **Marauders** story [that began back in *Uncanny X-Men* #211] took place in the [Morlock] tunnels, but this will be getting mutants out of the mansion, off of Muir Island and sending them all on the run."

The first wave of X-Men, including **Cyclops**, **Phoenix**, **Wolverine**, **Storm** and **Cannonball**, will get hit the hardest during the crossover. "When you take out those first four especially, you know the X-Men are knee-deep," said Lobdell. "While we're not going to see 'Days of Future Past,' we are going to be seeing events that will redefine the X-Men."

The Earth-based events will not affect the characters in *Uncanny X-Men*, who are currently on a space odyssey that began in issue #342. **Beast**, **Bishop**, **Gambit**, **Joseph** and **Rogue** will remain in space until the completion of the crossover. "We'll be focusing very tightly on these characters in *Uncanny*," said Lobdell. "We'll see Beast's love interest develop, and watch how he reacts when that love interest is threatened. However, we may flash to the other X-Men involved in the crossover in *Uncanny*."

Leading into the summer crossover, there will be two new additions to the X-Men roster—one man and one woman—both being brand-new mutant characters. The first of the two new characters will be introduced in April's *Uncanny X-Men* [#345], while the second shows up in June's *X-Men* [#67]. According to Lobdell, the woman will cause problems for the X-Men, because she really doesn't want to be a member. "Unlike many of the original X-Men, she has an entire life outside being a mutant and it completely crashes because of Operation Zero Tolerance," said Lobdell. "She won't be mysterious like Gambit, but she'll cause problems because she really doesn't want to be with the X-Men."

Above: Is this unnamed character the newest X-Man? Opposite: A new techno-villain terrorizes Sister Maria, the nun who found the anmesiac Magneto

As for the newest male X-Men character, Lobdell would only say that he will have "arguably the oddest powers ever in the history of mutantkind."

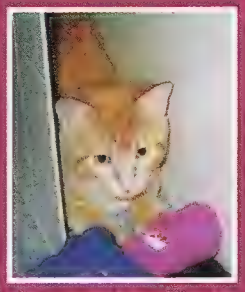
The upcoming crossover will also introduce a new big villain (whose name has yet to be determined) that is currently being designed by **Joe Madureira** (*Uncanny X-Men*). "The bad guy moves the story along, and that's all I can say about him at this time," said Lobdell.

When asked if Xavier would return during this crossover, Lobdell responded, "I haven't seen him around anywhere."

■ *Matthew Senreich*

CORRECTION

In the "Amalgam" news story that ran in *Wizard #67*, *Bat-Thing* is actually a cross between DC's Man-Bat and Marvel's Man-Thing, and not a cross between Batman and the Thing as originally reported.



Chaos erupts on the set of Disney's "That Darn Cat." "Everything was going great until Galactus showed up," commented director. "Then Boorsie got the Power Cosmic, hocked up a hairball and mounted the devourer of worlds. It was like a John Byrne comic gone all wrong."

Body-sculpting contest featured comic fans packed in mud. "Guys, this...uh...this stuff is getting hard," murmured doomed volunteer. "I have to go to the bath...oooo...that's worm."

Curious oddity sighted at local comic con. "Dignity! Yes, boys and girls, for only $3 each I'll teach you all about dignity!" pitched the vile creature before being driven off by torches and clubs.

ahead

ROBINSON WRITES 'GEN-X'!

ASH/AZRAEL CROSSOVER!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Superman Shuffle: Michelinie Resigns, Others Switch Titles

Writer **David Michelinie** has resigned as the writer of DC's ***Action Comics*** and, despite early reports on various computer networks, it has nothing to do with the changes in Superman's powers and costume. His final issue will be *Action Comics #736*, shipping in June.

"It's a question of self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction," Michelinie told *Wizard*. "The book has proven for me to be frustrating from a creative standpoint. It's just a combination of my eccentricities and the way the Superman books are done. We get together once a year to work up storylines and what parts will fall into which titles, and we end up with a chart that outlines it all. So I sit down to come up with a really good story and I find that I frequently have to start the book only seconds after a cliffhanger from the previous book and end it in a setup for the next person. And then I also have to juggle in subplot A and subplot B.

Al Ortega

"It's quite a challenge and there's a satisfaction in doing good work within those confines, but I haven't found that it's conducive to self-expression," he continued. "I knew that going in, and I'm eternally grateful to [DC's Executive Editor] **Mike Carlin** for giving me the opportunity to write Superman, but I think now I need to find something that will give me more personal satisfaction." That said, Michelinie noted that he has no projects or assignments pending right now, and is actively seeking work.

"It's a very personal decision and has nothing to do with any specifics of the upcoming stories," he concluded.

As a result of Michelinie's resignation, Superman editor **Joey Cavalieri** has done some creative shuffling: Artists **Stuart Immonen** and **José Marzan Jr.** will be moving over to *Action* from *Adventures of Superman*, with Immonen taking on his first regular writing assignment. **Tom Grummett** and **Dennis Rodier** will be leaving *Action Comics* to join writer **Karl Kesel** on *Adventures of Superman*. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Robinson Fills in for Lobdell on 'Generation X'

Al Ortega

Generation X graduates to a new era with a new writer.

Scott Lobdell, writer of Marvel Comics' *Generation X*, has announced that he will be taking a four-month hiatus from the title beginning in May with issue #29. In his absence, **James Robinson** (*Leave it to Chance*, *Starman*) will take up *Generation X*'s writing reigns until Lobdell's return in September. "The four issues will be scripted by James based on a rough story that I came up with," said Lobdell. "I might be sad about leaving if it was anyone but James, but I feel confident with him writing."

Lobdell, who also writes both *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*, attributes his decision to leave *Generation X* to his ever-growing writing slate. In addition to the two core X-books, Lobdell is also currently co-writing ***Iron Man*** and working on an ***X-Men/WildC.A.T.s*** crossover. "Part of my decision to take a hiatus came from **Mark Waid**'s idea to take a break from ***The Flash***," said Lobdell. "I have a lot going on and I figure if someone like Mark could leave a book that's close to him, I could [too]."

In addition, Lobdell cites a desire to try and revamp other Marvel characters as part of his reasoning for leaving. "I think the whole Marvel bankruptcy thing has sparked a desire to look at the rest of the Marvel line a little closer, and see what kind of changes can be made," said Lobdell. "I'd love a shot at that."

Meanwhile, Robinson will write a one-part story in May as part of Marvel "Flashback Month" (see related news story on Page 17) and a three-part storyline tentatively called "No Surrender" which will somehow tie into the summer X-crossover. "I don't know all the details of the story quite yet," said Robinson. "I'm still talking with Bob [Harras, Editor-in-Chief] and Scott [Lobdell] about it, but I believe it deals with Skin's friends." ■ *MS*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

- In July comes **Frank Miller**'s ***Sin City: Family Values***, published by Dark Horse Comics. This hardcover graphic novel is slated to be 120 pages.
- Sources inside **Marvel** indicate that the publisher is all set to launch a science-fiction comic book imprint. It is unknown as to whether or not the **Star Trek**/Paramount Comics line will be a part of it.
- Writers and drinking buddies **Grant Morrison** and **Mark Millar** have agreed to become the new ***Vampirella*** writing team for at least 12 issues. Their first issue from Harris Comics, due out later this year, is on a mini-series tentatively called *Vampirella: Rebirth*.
- **Rob Liefeld**'s Extreme Studios has announced that it has tapped *Supreme* writer **Alan Moore** to reboot the entire Extreme Universe in a project titled "Judgment Day." It is expected to hit in May. The extent of the changes have yet to be announced.
- Sources indicate that **Alan Moore** has signed on to write a **Gen**[13] Christmas one-shot for **WildStorm** later this year. Art for framing sequences will be by **Dave Gibbons** and **Brian Bolland**, who both made history with Moore—Gibbons on ***Watchmen*** and Bolland on ***Batman: The Killing Joke***.
- DC Comics' popular ***JLA*** is spinning off a new hawk-man this summer with the four-issue ***Zauriel*** mini-series chronicling the adventures of a fallen angel slated to be a new member of the League. After appearing in *JLA #6-#7*, *Zauriel #1*, written by **Mark Millar** should follow in July.
- In April, the ***Hitman*** team of **Garth Ennis** and **John McCrea** will do a four-issue Caliber Press ***Dicks*** mini-series about two private eyes featuring all the sex, violence and insanity you *can't* see in the Comics Code-approved *Hitman*.

'Flashback Month' Spotlights Marvel's Glory Years

Marvel Comics is flashing back to its early days.

Marvel Comics has announced that May will be deemed Marvel "Flashback Month." With the exception of the "**Heroes Reborn**" titles, all Marvel comics that month will feature self-contained stories that take place before the **Fantastic Four** were ever bombarded by cosmic rays and **Peter Parker** was bitten by a radioactive spider. "We're going to flashback 10 years in Marvel time," said John Cerilli, junior publicist at Marvel. "We're going back to a time *before* the heroes had their powers."

Similar to the old Marvel Annuals, "Flashback Month" will maintain a distinct separation from all current storylines and provide readers with a month of nostalgia for a character's origin or even just a story providing insight into that character's youthful days. It is also possible that certain titles will feature a supporting cast member or a prominent villain. "'Flashback Month' is like a commercial," said **Scott Lobdell**, writer of ***Uncanny X-Men*** and ***X-Men***. "It won't interrupt things so much, but it'll be separate from the main program."

The **Spider-Man** books exemplify the variety of stories planned. Besides having a young Peter Parker and his **Uncle Ben** take a fishing trip, other Spider-Man books will feature the rise to power of villains such as the **Kingpin** and Norman Osborn (the **Green Goblin**). In addition, one Spidey title will examine Peter Parker's role at the *Daily Bugle* before he became Spider-Man. "At first, we all thought what a stupid idea this 'Flashback Month' thing was, because the premise is to look at characters before they got their powers," said **Todd DeZago**, writer of *Sensational Spider-Man*. "That didn't sound so interesting. But as we started to realize that we had this whole supporting cast to tap into and the potential for fun stories, our cursing turned into praising."

According to Marvel, the stories in each title will ideally foreshadow a story element that will come up in future story arcs. For instance, Lobdell mentioned that one of his two X-books will feature **Bastion**'s origin and motivation. "And Bastion will factor into this summer's crossover," said Lobdell.

Once "Flashback Month" ends, June will see the return of the regular story arcs in all Marvel titles. ■ *MS*

Azrael and Ash Team Up to Battle Arson Threat

Gotham City's former **Batman** and New York City's superpowered firefighter will meet in a one-shot graphic novel this March.

"The idea was that the guys who created **Azrael**—me and **Joe Quesada**—would get together and do a crossover with Joe's creator-owned character, **Ash**," said writer **Denny O'Neil**. "It looked like a pretty neat caper—to link these two disparate but related characters. I was delighted with my collaboration with Joe and I thought the ***Batman: Sword of Azrael*** mini-series was one of the best things I'd ever done."

Azrael/Ash reteams Quesada and O'Neil

"It seemed like a natural combination to me," Quesada agreed. "Both characters are based around a fire motif. They're both young heroes. There's a dichotomy too. Ash is a firefighter who wants to be a hero in the worst way possible and finds himself with powers beyond his wildest dreams. Azrael is a young guy who had the powers thrust upon him and doesn't want to be a hero."

In the one-shot story, there are a series of fires in New York City which look like they may have been set by Azrael, since a burning angel figure is seen in the flames by some witnesses. At Batman's urging, Azrael goes to the Big Apple to clear himself of the suspected arson.

"The villain is something we created just for this graphic novel; I doubt it has any life beyond that," O'Neil explained. "You want an antagonist whose motivation and modus operandi are unique, not just another snarling, costumed bad guy. I worked very hard to come up with a villain who's a little off-beat and sort of strange. Ultimately, the readers will tell me whether or not I succeeded." ■ *PDO*

get ready...

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Catching Up With...

TODD DEZAGO AND 'SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN'

It's been a few months since the whole Spider-Clone fiasco ended, and Spider-Man is finally re-establishing himself as the fun-loving and light-hearted character we all know and love. Todd DeZago, writer of *Sensational Spider-Man*, is working hard with penciler Mike Wieringo to bring in the fun elements of Spidey's roots (like the classic villains and supporting cast). *Wizard* decided to check in with DeZago and see what's in store for the ol' web-slinger.

Photo courtesy of Todd DeZago

What will be happening in *Sensational Spider-Man* in the next few months?
Fun. We're just finishing up a Savage Land story and are now moving to a story about the Prowler, who was injured in a *Spider-Man Unlimited* issue not too long ago. The original Prowler, Hobie Brown, is now paralyzed. Though there's nothing fun about being paralyzed, the story will be light. It'll revolve around someone stealing the Prowler's costume. The new Prowler will be pretty inexperienced with his new abilities and powers, and will attract the attention of the Vulture, who the old Prowler had some dealings with. And I promise that the consequences for the Vulture of this story will be what everybody has been hoping for.

What's Peter Parker going to be doing these days: teaching or returning to the *Daily Bugle* as a photographer?
Peter's going back to classes so that he can be done with school. We've always looked at Peter Parker and thought he should be a student because everybody remembers him as starting out as a student. If he becomes a teacher, he'll almost become too responsible and too much like an adult, and then you can't identify with him so much anymore. So he'll go back to school, because we also don't want to make him a failure and a drop-out.

May is Marvel's "Flashback Month." What can we expect to see then?
Sensational Spider-Man will have a 13-year-old Peter Parker and Uncle Ben on a fishing trip. It's not going to be a typical [bickering] father-and-son bonding story either. It's going to be an all-out crazy time, because it's a fishing trip that goes wrong. Probably every Stan Lee and Jack Kirby creature from the old monster comics of the '70s will show up.

Will any heroes guest star in the near future?
The only one I can think of is Tigra from the West Coast Avengers; she's coming back since nobody's seen her for a while. We're going to find out where she was and what she's been doing and how it ties into something Spider-Man will be doing come June, but details are still being worked out on that.

What villains are you planning to have show up?
We'll probably also feature Rhino in that Tigra story. And I already mentioned the Prowler and the Vulture.

So Ben Reilly won't be popping up again?
I think he's pretty much dead. Dead as dead can be.

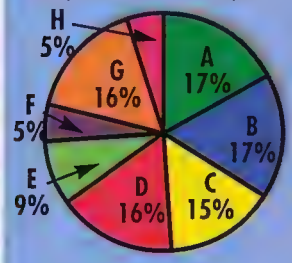
Any big Spidey crossovers being planned for the summer?
It's still being worked out, but we know we want to make our crossover light. We're looking to have the crossover be Peter and Mary Jane going on vacation. Mike Wieringo and I just got so excited about a story like that. We're hoping it will involve the return of the Looter. It'll be nutty and funny. We'll have it all tcke place on a cruise ship. But again, none of this is set yet, and we still have to see where all the other Spidey writers would want to take it. ■ *MS*

Question of the Month

The big **Marvel** summer X-crossover, tentatively titled "No Exit," is sneaking up on us. According to our sources, the crossover will feature some of the worst anti-mutant sentiments the Marvel Universe has ever seen. With such tempers flaring, we wondered about the possibility of a member of the **X-Men** dying. It could happen. With that in mind, we used our "Wizard World" forum on AOL to find out what our online friends thought.

Our first question was:

What member of the X-Men would you most like to see bite the dust during this summer crossover: **A)** Archangel; **B)** Bishop; **C)** Cannonball; **D)** Cyclops; **E)** Joseph; **F)** Professor X; **G)** Psylocke or **H)** Other?



Though it was a close race, fans seemed to lean toward killing off Archangel or Bishop. However, the surprise was the shocking appearance of Cyclops so high on the list! To think, Cyclops ranked near the top when we here at *Wizard* didn't even include him on the ballot…he was a write-in vote!

Wizard also heard through the grapevine that two new mutants will be joining the X-Men! That's right…**TWO NEW X-MEN!** While their identities remain secret, we know that they will be two totally new characters. However, us *Wizard* folks wanted to find out if there were any *existing* mutants you wanted to join the X-ranks. So we also asked…

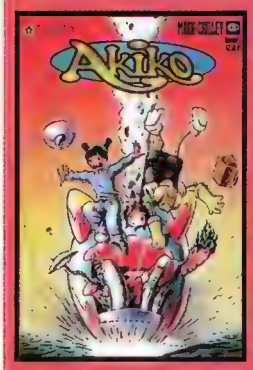
• What existing Marvel mutant (who's not already on another X-team) would you like to see join the X-Men: Blink **(26%)**, Quicksilver **(22%)**, Morph **(20%)**, X-Man **(16%)**, Sunfire **(9%)**, Threnody **(5%)**, or Other **(2%)**?

Go "Age of Apocalypse" Blink, Morph and Sunfire! Those alternate-reality characters all received the bulk of the votes. Hey, who knows…maybe Marvel will see this AOL poll and take our suggestions. Keep your fingers crossed, True Believers!

****Special thanks to "Wizard World"'s Asteroid X Club for its help in soliciting responses for this poll.**** ■ *Sorrell Booke*

SPOTLIGHT ON:

TITLE: Akiko
CREATOR: Mark Crilley
PUBLISHER: Sirius Entertainment
CURRENT ISSUE: *Akiko #12 hit the streets in March*
BACK ISSUES: *Akiko on the Planet Smoo (a one-shot special which pre-dates the ongoing series) and Akiko #1-#11 were all published by Sirius Entertainment.*



Think of Akiko as a book telling a very well-remembered dream or relaying a story that only a young child's imagination could conceive. Akiko revolves around a 10-year-old girl—the title character—who narrates her adventures through a "Wizard of Oz"-type of world-account, with lands such as the planet Smoo, Frankenstein's palace and the sticky mountain. Transporting Akiko to a series of [illegible] Akiko is selected many times to the Planet Smoo, where she is entrusted to lead a mission to rescue the planet's Princess. Readers follow Akiko's adventures as she finds her way on Smoo and struggles to get back on the trail to finding the missing Princess—though she may be sidetracked by Sky Pirates or monsters along the way.

With a supporting cast of funny and [illegible] characters, Tomorrow To Mars is [illegible] book. With [illegible] Akiko has a [illegible] quality to it, [illegible] story for all ages, similar to the movie of Disney's "Toy Story." Still, the story contains a very pleasant quality, combining [illegible] elements that remind [illegible] of "The Wizard of Oz" and "Star Wars." However, it's Crilley's ability to narrate the story through the thoughts and eyes of young Akiko that makes this book a pleasure to read. ■ *MS*

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

Egos are exploding online! "Wizard World"'s *exclusive* Online E.G.O. has got fans and pros in a debating frenzy. In January, "Wizard World" quietly launched the Online E.G.O. section with a pointed editorial by **Fabian Nicieza**. In February, we followed up with another zinger by **Dave Wohl**. In March, we hosted **Peter Bagge** and in April **Colleen Doran** will be the featured comics pro.

The really keen feature of the Online E.G.O. is that you can respond to editorials by Nicieza, Wohl, Bagge and Doran. Instead of the pros talking *to* you, they're talking *with* you. Each writer will write at least two more times this year, so you'll have plenty of chances to go head-to-head with the people who make the comics. Tell 'em whatcha think!

In mid-February, Sean Jordan's ZENtertainment moved from ChipNet on AOL to "Wizard World." The popular online 'e-zine focuses on entertainment news including music, television, film, toys, games and comics. "We'll reach an audience better suited to our content," said Jordan after moving to "Wizard World."

ZENtertainment has an uncanny knack for uncovering news stories even before they hit the news outlets including television. Jordan's 'e-zine is e-mailed to subscribers twice a week. "Wizard World" posts ZENtertainment, downloadable video games and cool pictures. You gotta see it to believe it!

Call 800-754-4400 to hook up to "Wizard World" on America Online. You'll get free software and 15 hours of free online time. Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

APRIL 14 (MONDAY)

- **BREAKING IN** Featuring: **David Campiti**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 19 (SATURDAY)

- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 24 (THURSDAY)

- **MYSTERY GUEST** Featuring **Joanna Sandsmark & Mystery Guest**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

CONGRATULATIONS to Jas Ingram, winner of the "Wizard World" January Drawing Board Contest. Jas won one of them cool, mad Wolverine laser cut statues provided by our pals at Laser Mach. Keep uploading your Drawing Board entries to the Picture Gallery of "Wizard World." There's a new winner and prize each month!

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

for something...

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Where Are They Now?

STEVE OLIFF

"I've never really wanted to be a colorist," said Steve Oliff, president of **Olyoptics** and the man who pioneered the modern era of comic book computer coloring. "But I saw this golden opportunity to revolutionize an aspect of the comic book industry, so I had to experiment."

Steve Oliff has always dreamed of publishing his own comic book, but back in 1978, fate steered him down another path that would radically change the comic book industry. Focusing his artistic abilities on coloring, Oliff began in comics picking up small coloring jobs from companies like **Pacific Comics**, **Eclipse Comics** and **Comico**.

Photo courtesy of Steve Oliff

Slowly establishing a reputation for himself as a colorist, Oliff began getting offers to color the works of **Jack Kirby**, **Steve Ditko** and **Will Eisner**. "Being sort of like a big fish in a small pond with coloring, it wasn't too hard to get recognized," said Oliff. "I bounced around and worked for anyone who would hire me and it was amazing to work with some of the greatest."

In the early 1980s, Oliff began testing the coloring waters by air-brushing some of his work, a practice unheard of at the time. "I can't remember when I started doing air-brushing, but I remember doing the ***Blackhawk*** mini-series for DC," said Oliff.

With an abundance of offers, Oliff opened Olyoptics, his own coloring house. Around the same time, his interest in computers heightened, seeing the possibilities computers presented, so he decided to take Olyoptics down that path.

Oliff's first computer-colored work was ***Mr. Monster*** for Eclipse. However, it was Marvel's ***Akira*** (1988) that pushed computer coloring to the forefront. Instead of using the flat-coded coloring technique, Oliff took advantage of the existing computer software like Pixelcraft to create a new synthesis of air-brushing and computer techniques. "*Akira* was the first comic to be colored on a regular basis with computers," said Oliff. "And when people started seeing the depth computers could produce, it set the whole coloring revolution off."

Oliff remained ahead of the competition always testing new ground with new software (like Photoshop) and introduced a new standard of coloring comics with Olyoptic's involvement at **Image Comics**. "***Spawn*** really revamped coloring," said Oliff. "My crew at Olyoptics and I kept learning more and more about mixing painted stuff with our computer abilities to make for more crisp looking art."

At the height of the Image craze, Oliff's Olyoptics was coloring approximately 60 percent of the Image line and a handful of other companies' work.

With the massive boom in the computer-coloring market, many Olyoptics employees decided to venture out on their own or to other coloring houses like **Digital Chameleon** or **I.H.O.C.** "It was a little tense when people started leaving Olyoptics," said Oliff. "But since most who left are still my friends, it wasn't so bad. I guess it was necessary."

Oliff is now turning his sights back to his original intentions when entering the comic book field: self-publishing his own comic *Armature* (#3 hits stands in March). "I've dreamed of publishing *Armature* since like 1984," said Oliff. "So doing *Armature* right now is exactly what I want. I guess you could say this is my future." ■ *MS*

Beast Joins Karma, Cannonball in Three-Issue Search for Missing Kids

In a move to finally resolve a decades-long plot thread, the **Beast** will team up with former **New Mutants Karma** and **Cannonball** to seek the fate of Karma's two missing younger siblings.

The children were kidnapped by Karma's evil uncle, former Vietnamese General Coy, way back in *Marvel Team-Up* #100—she's been hunting for them ever since.

"The story was originally conceived as a trio of heroes—Beast, Cannonball and Karma—finally tracking down Karma's missing brother and sister, and resolving that long-standing plotline," said editor Jay Gardner, "but when the **Body Shop** became a part of the deal, it was clear that the Beast's expertise in mutant biology and his own experience in multiple transformations made him the lead character in the story."

Writer **Keith Giffen** and artist **Cedric Nocon** will put the hairy mutant and his youthful compatriots through their paces in the three-issue mini-series beginning in March. The trio will discover that the Coy kids are now in the hands of villains **Spiral** and **Viper**, who have turned them over to the Body Shop, the underground genetic laboratory.

"It was fun to play around with two sharp female villains like Viper and Spiral," Giffen said. "I like to find the core of the characters and play them off one another. Spiral's always been this woman who shows up with her swords, grinning. She seems to be having a good time. But Viper is this scarred, driven type. You put them together and you get this almost 'Absolutely Fabulous' interplay—good-natured bitching."

And, Giffen adds, this won't be the last we see of the Vietnamese former New Mutant: "This not only wraps up this ancient plot, but it lays the groundwork for future stories about Karma." ■ *PDO*

shocking!

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Action Comics,
Superman: The Man of Steel, and
Superman: The Man of Tomorrow.

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ABBA DABBA

Abba Dabba will launch a new line of comic books on the World Wide Web on April 7, with each title costing only 50 cents or a dollar to download. The line's roster will feature Keith Giffen's *Trencher* previously published by Image Comics, Bart Sears' *Brutes and Babes* and Ernie Colon's *Warmonger*. The first Abba Dabba titles scheduled to be released in April are Andy Smith's *1st Man*, Brian Buniak's *Bunitoons*, Darrell Goza's *Scripigraphics* anthology and Howard Simpson's *Zone 26*. Interested fans can check out teasers on Abba Dabba's Website at **www.abbadabba.com/fun.html**. After April 7, that site will be home to the company's growing line of books.

ACCLAIM COMICS

In April, things continue to get weirder for the Dysfunctional Duo in *Quantum and Woody* #3 when Woody buys a goat....Sam Beckett returns in the April one-shot *Quantum Leap Special: The Leaper Before*....The Stormbringers cometh in the April one-shot *Operation: Stormbringer*, a special event by Brian Augustyn, Mark Waid and Doug Braithwaite. The 45-page issue introduces the X-O-armor clad Teutonic Knight as well as Sgt. Turok of the Howling Easy, Doctor Tomorrow and several others....Things get hydrated in *Waterworld* #1 (of 4) when Chris Golden, Tom Sniegoski and Kevin Kobasic explore the Great Deluge!

ANTARCTIC PRESS

In April, Antarctic releases *Hepcats* #5, in which Arnie begins to think that Erica's accident was not entirely accidental....The first issue of the three-issue bimonthly mini-series *Ninja High School vs. Project A-ko* will also be on stands in April.

ARCHIE COMICS

Witness the death of Sonic's popular girlfriend Princess Sally in March's *Sonic the Hedgehog* #47, which begins the major four-part story arc, "Endgame."

BONGO COMICS

He's tried unsuccessfully to steal candy from a baby. He's blocked out the sun in an attempt to increase revenues for his power plant. And now Mr. Burns has absolutely gone too far! After firing all his employees, Mr. Burns replaces them with clones of Waylon Smithers—and it isn't long before the Smithereens are at each others' throats! Can the real Smithers, Homer, Lenny and Carl save the plant? Find out this April in *Simpsons Comics* #30!...Also that month, check out *Jimbo* #7, as our hero descends into Focky Bocky, part shopping mall, part blistering pit of damnation!

BRAINSTORM COMICS

Vamperotica #25, which is scheduled to come out in March, will feature a special guest appearance by London Night's Razor!

CALIBER PRESS

The *Deodato Autographed Set*, due out in April, gives you four different comics by Mike Deodato Jr. in a $12.95 collector's pack. Each pack contains a comic signed by the Brazilian artist....Plus, April's *Jinx Charity Special* gives readers a great chance to jump into the bizarre world of creator Brian Michael Bendis' bounty hunter. As a reader, you get to decide what charity your cash goes to by choosing which cover you like best.

CARTOON BOOKS

Bone Volume Four: The Dragonslayer arrives in April as a 184-page deluxe hardcover edition from Cartoon Books. Collecting *Bone* #20-#27, one of the most exciting and fantastic chapters of the Bone saga, *The Dragonslayer* includes the nighttime journey of Fone Bone, Thorn and Gran'ma Ben and their terrifying encounter with Kingdak, as well as Phoney Bone's sunrise sacrifice of the Great Red Dragon! Available at all specialty stores, *The Dragonslayer* retails for just $24.95. A softcover edition will follow in June.

CHAOS! COMICS

Available in April are Chaos! Phone Cards, retailing for $10 each and charged up for 10 minutes of domestic calling. Art for each is provided by Steven Hughes and Justiniano....Fantasy artist Brom contributes the Lady Death/Evil Ernie limited-edition print, an 11" x 17" painting of the Chaos! dynamic duo, limited to 2,500 prints with a suggested retail of $10 each.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

The Shi Fan Club Boxed Kit debuts in April, letting you join Crusade's new club right at your comic store. The starter kit includes a membership card, a "Shi Happens!" button, a copy of the exclusive Rising Sun edition of *Shi: Heaven and Earth* #1 (a sneak peek at the *Shi* sequel signed by its writer/artist Billy Tucci) and a mail-in registration card for more goodies. The package is just $19.95....The three-part *TCB* (Takin' Care of Business) series, spotlighting *Shi*'s hard-boiled detective Peter DeNyse, features fully painted art by Val Mayerik and starts in April.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Help kick off a three-month Hellboy celebration starting this May with *Hellboy: The Lost Army*. This $14.95 softcover novel features a story by Christopher Golden, with spot illustrations by none other than Mike Mignola....The six issue mini-series *Star Wars: Dark Force Rising* by Mike Baron, Terry Dodson and Kevin Nowlan adapts Timothy Zahn's novel and starts this May....Look for a trade paperback collecting Russ Manning's "Classic Star Wars" strips. This 240-page collection ships in May, and reprints the first Boba Fett appearance in print!...Manga fans rejoice! May sees the launch of two new series: *Oh My Goddess!: Mara Strikes Back* #1 starts a three-issue series, while *Gunsmith Cats: Shades of Grey* #1 begins a new five-parter....*Ghost* #25 reveals all sorts o' secrets, including just who killed Elisa Cameron! This double-sized issue retails for $3.95....*Dark Horse Presents* #121 in May features an Aliens story by Croatian superstar Darko Macan and Tommy Lee Edwards (Helix's *Gemini Blood*)....Dark Horse goes mad in May with the *Madman Comics* limited-edition hardcover. Collecting the *Yearbook '95* and *Yearbook '96*, this 320-page monster is signed by creator Mike Allred and comes in a fancy slipcase, all for just $99.95....Paul Pope's "One Trick Rip-Off" serial from *Dark Horse Presents* is collected this May in one volume for $12.95....Bryan Talbot's critically acclaimed *The Tale of One Bad Rat* is collected in a signed and numbered limited edition hardcover this May for $69.95....May's *Starship Troopers: Insect Touch*, an original three-issue mini-series written by Warren Ellis, lends up to this November's "Starship Troopers" motion picture.

DC COMICS

The *Kingdom Come* slipcase hardcover edition from Graphitti Designs ships in May. It contains 12 new pages by series creators Mark Waid and Alex Ross....Gearing up for the big Batman movie push this summer, May sees one-shots starring Bane, Poison Ivy, Batgirl and Mr. Freeze.

EVENT COMICS

Ash: Cinder & Smoke #1 introduces a major new villain (the hitman Smoke), a new female firefighter in Ashley's life and the hero's new creative team: writers Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn, artist Humberto Ramos and inker Jimmy Palmiotti. You'll also learn more about Ashley's father's investigation into the mob in this May issue....The Event experience gets cooler with the Event Comics Fan Club Membership Kit, being released in April and featuring an exclusive foil-stamped *Gold Hologram Ash* #0, an Ash Chromium card, a 7" x 10" Kid Death and Fluffy print signed by Joe Quesada and Palmiotti, a full-color 22 Brides postcard and a membership card. Members will also score advance Event news, all for only $29.95.

EXHIBIT A PRESS

In March, Exhibit A Press will reissue the very first issue of *Wolff & Byrd* in a special 40-page one-shot called *Wolff & Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre Greatest Writs*, which will also contain selections from the *Wolff & Byrd* newspaper strip.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

In April, Dan Clowes riffs on the state of the comic industry in issue #18 of the ever-controversial *Eightball*....Peter Bagge helps us see the popular newspaper strip "Cathy" through the eyes of the enigmatic R. Crumb in *Hate* #27. As a special bonus, Bagge actually collaborated with Crumb to create the "Cathy" parody.

HALL OF HEROES

From the company that brought you *Snowman*, *Cyberfrog* and *Creed*, Hall of Heroes introduces *SleepWalking* #1 in April. The book will show off a cover by *Batman* artist Kelley Jones.

HARRIS COMICS

April sees the long-awaited release of *Vampirella vs. Hemorrhage* #1 (of 3), where Vampi becomes caught in Hemorrhage's mad schemes of revenge. This three-issue series, with art by Michael Bair, features a painted cover by Mark Texeira and retails for $3.50....If you liked J. Scott Campbell's Vampi cover to *Vampirella Lives*, then you'll love his Vampirella poster, which ships in April for $6.95....Look for a three-issue Pantha mini-series this fall by Mark Millar and Mark Texeira, which follows up the recent *Vampirella/Pantha* one-shot.

IMAGE COMICS

• TOP COW COMICS

To mark Spawn Month, Top Cow re-releases the *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade Collected Edition* in May with a story by Garth Ennis and a new cover by Brandon Peterson and Batt, plus never-before-seen sketchbook art and pin-ups....Also available

in May is *The Darkness Collected Edition #1*, featuring art by Marc Silvestri and Ennis handling the writing chores.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

Missed one of those rare Gen[13] stories? Fear not, faithful follower, 'cause the *Gen[13] Backlist* trade paperback is reprinting a whole mess of lesser-known Gen[13] adventures. This 136-pager includes all four stories from *Gen[13] #0*, a Gen[13] tale by Walt Simonson (from the *WildStorm[1]* anthology), the *Gen[13]: The Unreal World* one-shot by Humberto Ramos and the 13-cover-variantized *Gen[13]* (vol. 2) #1 (including all 13 covers). Plus, as a special treat, Ryan Benjamin will be fixing up the art to *Gen[13] #1/2*, with Brandon Choi touching up the dialogue. The whole shebang ships in April for $16.95. And you StormWatch fans, be on the lookout, 'cause StormWatch is *everywhere* in May! Find out how, next month.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

It's a blast from the past in April, as *Atomic City Tales #4* is an all-retro issue, taking you back to a 1950s Atomic City. April sees the conclusion to the four-issue *The Crow: Waking Nightmares* by Christopher Golden and Phil Hester. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Violent Cases* is available in a hardcover edition, with a new McKean cover, as well as corrected colors approved by the creators. It ships in April for $30. *Penthouse Comix Presents #1: Miss Adventure* collects the "Miss Adventure" strips from *Penthouse Comix* in one graphic album. This 77-pager (for adults only) ships in April for $14.95.

LIGHTNING COMICS

Here's Lightning's correct Website address, incorrectly printed in issue #66: **http://www.menubytes.com/lightning**. Look for the *Creed: The Void Collected Edition*, collecting the first *Creed* mini-series, in April, for only $5.95.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

Get to know the elf princess Tiro, a down-of-time warrior who's trying to unite the savage tribe of Pangea, in May's *Jurassic Jane #1*, a mature-readers book. The Stephen Sandoval-painted cover to *Full Metal Fiction #2*, out in May, depicts actress Marilyn Monroe as Razor. The $3.95 anthology book is suggested for mature folks.

MARVEL COMICS

Adam Kubert makes his debut as penciler, teaming up with writer Peter David, on April's *The Incredible Hulk #454*. The issue features a host of special guests, including Ka-Zar, Shanna the She-Devil, Zabu and Wolverine. April's *Avengers #8* from Rob Liefeld, Jeph Loeb and Ian Churchill introduces Simon Williams, a.k.a. Wonder Man. In April's *X-Man #28*, Nate is faced with a dilemma: An offer exists to cure the powers that are killing him. The only problem is, the offer is made by the Dark Beast. What should he do? *Wolverine* has a new penciler, in Lenil Francis Yu, with April's *Wolverine #114*, and guess what—the hero will sport a new costume and he'll even have a nose again.

MAXIMUM PRESS

Dan Fraga handles both penciling and writing duties in April's *Santa the Barbarian vs. The Easter Bunny Spring Special*. *Avengelyne #14* in April features a guest appearance by Bloodwulf.

RADIO COMIX

Created by ex-Antarctic Press people Elin Winkler, Pat Duke and Matthew High, Radio Comix will launch a new line of titles in April, beginning with Stan Sakai's *The Art of Usagi Yojimbo: Volume One*.

SEMPLE COMICS

Captain Canuck joins the anti-smoking campaign in Canada and will start to show up on Canadian TV, PSA spots, posters and other media forms to discourage teen smoking.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

The buzz-receiving *The Copybook Tales* will no longer be quarterly, but will be going bimonthly as of issue #4, due in mid-April. April also sees the release of Slave Labor's new series *The Waiting Place*.

ZEN COMICS PUBLISHING

Zen Intergalactic Ninja celebrates its 10th anniversary in 1997, starting with February's *Shojo Zen*, a follow-up to the 1996 *Manga Zen* mini-series.

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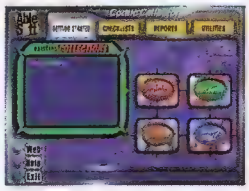

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THE SPIDER THAT'S ALSO AN

EXTERMINATOR

NEWS BITES

Erik Larsen Launches New 'Freak Force' Monthly

This March, Erik Larsen will relaunch ***Freak Force*** as an ongoing monthly title at **Image Comics**. *Freak Force*, which served as an 18-issue series from 1993-1995, stems directly from the pages of ***The Savage Dragon***. "Everything is story-driven for me, and I had so much subplot going on in the *Dragon* book that it was spilling out," said Larsen, writer/artist of *The Savage Dragon*, and scripter for the new *Freak Force* title. "So instead of making the Dragon a bit player in his own comic, I decided to get these [*Freak Force*] stories out there in their own book."

The recent break up between the Dragon and Freak Force's Rapture in *The Savage Dragon* #30 provides the launching ground for *Freak Force*. "Now that the relationship between them is terminated, there didn't seem to be as many connecting points with the Dragon book," said Larsen.

Freak Force features a group of Chicago-based bounty hunters trying to protect the same turf as the Savage Dragon. The first three-issue story arc will have Force members **Barbaric**, **Dart**, **Horridus**, **Rapture**, **Ricochet** and **Super Patriot** discover their greatest enemies. "This series is putting together what would be Freak Force's equivalent of the Fantastic Four's Frightful Four, a group of supervillains that corresponds with various members of the team," said Larsen. "However, this team of bad guys ended up being 40 times as powerful as Freak Force, so my biggest goal is keeping [the good guys] alive right now." ■*MS*

Spider-Man Collides With Badrock

Fun is the key as **Spider-Man** teams up with **Maximum Press**' comedic character **Badrock**.

Maximum Press is all set to publish a two-part *Spider-Man/Badrock* crossover hitting the stands this March.

Dan Jurgens will write the crossover with **Marat Mychaels** drawing the first issue and **Dan Fraga** penciling the conclusion. "Spider-Man and Badrock both share a youthful exuberance," said Jurgens. "I love Spider-Man, and there's something about Badrock that's just really fun, so it seemed like a great match for a story."

Spider-Man/Badrock will assume that the two cross-company characters exist within the same comic book universe. Set in a generic New York City, **Peter Parker** and **J. Jonah Jameson** are scheduled to interview **Shaft**, a member of Team Youngblood. When Shaft ditches the scheduled meeting, Badrock must fill his shoes and the story begins from there. "I wanted to streamline the story by putting them in the same universe," said Jurgens. "The fun of the story is them being together, not the explanation of how they got together."

Adding more mayhem to the mix, Jurgens will showcase numerous villains from Spidey's rogues gallery including **Carnage**, **Hobgoblin**, **Rhino** and **Venom**. "It seems like in all crossovers, people feel obligated to take one hero from each company and one bad guy from each company," said Jurgens. "I wanted to depart from what is normally done and use Spidey's classic villains because they are the coolest." ■*MS*

'Rib' Worms Its Way into Caliber

Andrew Ford gets lots of ribbing about ***Rib***, his offbeat comic about the struggles of a worm. Thanks to a deal with **Caliber Press**, he'll get more of the same—along with a new look.

"*Rib* will get more exposure, but I also think that the book will look more professional," Ford explained in an online interview. "I've never had the *means* to do everything on a computer, turning out a really slick looking product. I think that makes people take a book more seriously."

In May, *Rib* #1 reprints the original two issues from Ford's own Bookmark Productions in a 40-page special. After that, *Rib* becomes a 32-page bimonthly Caliber title. ■ *Buddy Scalera*

Anarky Battles to Improve Mankind

One of **Batman**'s stranger foes, the vigilante **Anarky**, takes center stage in a four-issue mini-series beginning in March. Joined by artist **Norm Breyfogle**, Anarky's creator **Alan Grant** brings his personal political philosophy to the comics page through the character.

"I don't look on Anarky as a bad guy," Grant said. "His motives have always been pure and clear. He views himself as a hero. It's only the fact that he's a vigilante and uses violence that has turned Batman against him.

"In the mini-series, his motives remain pure. He says that in order for mankind to survive, he must jump to a new state of consciousness, and he wants to help mankind make that jump," Grant continued.

In this self-imposed battle, Anarky first goes up against **Etrigan the Demon**. He follows that seeming mismatch with an even bigger David-and-Goliath battle against **Darkseid**. In the third issue, **Batman** takes a hand; and in the fourth issue, according to Grant, it looks like Anarky has overcome Batman and is able to carry through his plan.

"My position, and Anarky's as well," said Grant, "is that government is in place to enforce its will, whether that's for or against the wishes of the citizens." ■ *PDO* W

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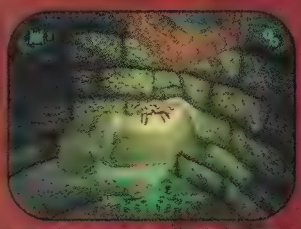

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PlayStation

What's Next

Will Marvel's bankruptcy do what supervillains couldn't: ace the X-Men and Spider-Man (opposite)?

for Marvel?

Marvel files for bankruptcy, fans want to know, 'Will I still get my comics?'

Spider-Man never had a battle on his hands like the one Marvel is facing.

The announcement that **Marvel Entertainment Group Inc.** filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on December 27 sent shockwaves throughout the comics industry and fans alike. Marvel Entertainment—comprised of Marvel Comics, Fleer/SkyBox (trading card company), Marvel Studios (film and television development), Marvel Mania (restaurant chain), Marvel Interactive (online services and computer products), Panini (international sticker business) and **Toy Biz** (toys and action figures)—now must restructure its operation in order to pay off the debt it has accumulated since expansion which began in 1993.

For the multi-million dollar corporation, the effects of the bankruptcy announcement are far-reaching. For the average comic fan, the impact is more tangible and concerns are more specific.

Fans want to know the answer to questions such as: If Marvel has no money, does this mean no more ***X-Men***? How can the company possibly keep publishing ***Spider-Man*** if it's bankrupt? How does the No. 1 publisher of comics go bankrupt, and how does that bode for the rest of the comics industry?

What follows is *Wizard*'s attempt to simplify an intricate and confusing story—analyzing how Marvel's bankruptcy filing will affect the company, and the average comic fan.

What is Chapter 11 bankruptcy?

Chapter 11 is the section of the Federal Bankruptcy Code for court-supervised reorganization of debtor companies. What that means is that when a company can no longer pay its bills or when the company expects future debts it cannot hope to pay, it will file for Chapter 11 protection. Under Chapter 11, a company continues to operate normally, paying its employees and contractors (such as freelance writers and artists); in the meantime, the bankruptcy court will expect the company to take steps to ensure payment of its debt and to make the company profitable again by restructuring its business practices and operations.

How did Marvel get to this point?

Beginning in the boom year of 1993 (when DC Comics' **"The Death of Superman"** story and general speculation on "hot" comics drove industry-wide circulation to a 10-year high), Marvel went on an expansion spree. Since 1993, Marvel Entertainment acquired a number of companies including Fleer/SkyBox, Panini, Malibu Comics, Heroes World and 26 percent of Toy Biz. To acquire these companies, Marvel borrowed money from a number of investors.

After acquiring these companies, the trading card and comic book industries took a downward turn and now Marvel does not have sufficient funds to repay the debt and cover operating expenses. Marvel CEO **Ron Perelman** offered a restructuring plan to take care of the operating expenses and to repay owed money. However, since that plan would devalue Marvel bonds and stock, the bondholders rejected Perelman's plan. Perelman responded by filing for bankruptcy and resubmitted the same exact financial restructuring plan to the Federal Bankruptcy Court for approval.

Will Marvel still publish my favorite comics like *X-Men* and *Spider-Man*?

Absolutely. Marvel's operations will continue as before. There could be trimming of the lines, as the company seeks to improve revenues by eliminating marginal titles. However, the move to eliminate titles seems highly unlikely. "As for selling off characters, there is absolutely no plan to do that," said Gary Fishman of Marvel Investor Relations. "Our goal is to make our existing characters stronger, continue to create new ones and maximize their potential among appropriate media, venues and products."

Where does the money come from to publish?

In part, from the same places it always has—by selling comics. It will also come from a special kind of loan called "debtor-in-possession financing," which serves to protect a restructuring company. Through the loan, Marvel will receive $100 million to help it maintain its current publishing schedule and to help the company continue to pay its employees. Meanwhile, Marvel will use the money that it would have normally used to publish to restructure itself into a more self-sufficient and profitable company.

Will cover prices increase?

It is doubtful. Price increases are generally a result of rising costs, including paper, printing and editorial costs.

How will this affect "Heroes Reborn"?

Not at all. **"Heroes Reborn"** is a contract, and all contracts, are supposed to be paid in full and completed. "We are doing business with our customers and licensees under normal business terms," said Fishman.

"Heroes Reborn" is still a go

Will creators leave my favorite comics?

Not because of the Chapter 11 situation. All editorial employees are being paid as usual, as are freelancers. So, Marvel staffers (like Editor-in-Chief **Bob Harras** and Editor **Ralph Macchio**), Marvel's exclusive freelancers (like artists **Andy Kubert** and **Joe Madureira**) and Marvel's non-exclusive freelancers (like writers Kurt Busiek and Mark Waid) will all get paid on time and in full. While some creative personnel may decide to swim in safer waters, that will be a decision made by the freelancer, not forced on Marvel by the bankruptcy court. Marvel has also said, so far, that it expects no further layoffs and, instead, will be expanding.

Will I still be able to buy my comics at my local shop?

Certainly. At the moment, no changes have been announced in Marvel's distribution system.

Who is Ron Perelman?

Ronald Perelman is a businessman that owns 80 percent of Marvel's stock. In the early 1990s, he bought Marvel Entertainment Group from New World Entertainment and began a series of moves to turn the company into what he termed a "youth entertainment company." Many observers think Perelman would like Marvel to be a rival to **Disney** or Warner Bros. in marketing and licensing of its characters.

What happens to the other companies connected to Marvel?

If the proposed restructuring is approved by the court, Toy Biz would be 100 percent owned by Marvel Entertainment (Marvel currently owns 26 percent). In addition, Marvel may consider selling off the less-profitable companies (such as Fleer/SkyBox). For now, Marvel proceeds with its reorganization. On January 13, Marvel combined its trading card businesses (Fleer/SkyBox) with its sticker business (Panini) and its online entertainment and interactive software business (Marvel Interactive) into a single division called Marvel Enterprises. Other divisions, such as the Marvel Mania theme park and restaurants and Marvel Films, are slated for expansion under the proposed restructuring to generate new sources of revenue. "There has been and will be absolutely no interruption of our development plans for TV and feature film production, interactive products and services, licensing and sponsor partnerships, themed restaurants and theme park attractions," said Fishman.

Does Marvel going bankrupt strengthen DC's position in the marketplace?

Not necessarily. Since Marvel will continue to publish all of its scheduled titles, nothing will really be different in the grand scope of things. However, fans may start to lose confidence in Marvel due to the labeling of "bankruptcy," and if that happens, DC could gain some ground on Marvel's dominance of the comic book market.

What's the downside of Marvel filing Chapter 11?

It makes the whole comics industry look like a risky proposition, meaning that lenders, entrepreneurs and film producers may be leery of investing in other comics publishers or properties.

What ramifications are there to Chapter 11 bankruptcy?

In one sense, the Chapter 11 filing *is* the solution to Marvel's financial problems. If it's successful, Marvel will be relatively debt-free and stronger than before. It's unlikely that Marvel will sell off its characters to other publishers—they are its major assets. It's possible that, after Marvel emerges from Chapter 11, Perelman may decide that his plans for the company cannot be executed, and he may seek a buyer for the company. Who could that buyer be? Marvel's characters would be attractive to many entertainment conglomerates, including Viacom (parent of **Paramount Pictures**) and News Corp. (which owns **Twentieth Century Fox** and Fox TV). Time-Warner, DC's parent company, is probably not interested in owning another comics publisher.

Where does all of this leave Marvel?

Marvel is in good shape to come out of Chapter 11 before the end of 1997 as a stronger, more profitable company. Chapter 11 bankruptcy will provide Marvel with the chance it needs to restructure the company into a more organized conglomerate and create a handful of self-sufficient companies that will be debt-free. In the meantime, Marvel Comics will have the opportunity to publish the X-Men, Spider-Man and other popular titles. Bankruptcy will not affect that.

What bankruptcy can do is give Marvel Entertainment the opportunity to restructure its company while still conducting business as usual. And bankruptcy may force Marvel to look closely at past business decisions and avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Many companies that have entered Chapter 11 voluntarily—such as **Macy's**, Chrysler and TWA—emerge from it as far stronger business enterprises. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill (with additional reporting by Matthew Senreich)*

THERE'S A NEW
SAVAGE
IN THE
SAVAGE
LAND
INCREDIBLE HULK
NUMBER 454
ADAM KUBERT
PETER DAVID • MARK FARMER
CATCH JUNGLE FEVER
APRIL 16
GUEST STARRING WOLVERINE
AND THE SAVAGE KAZAR!
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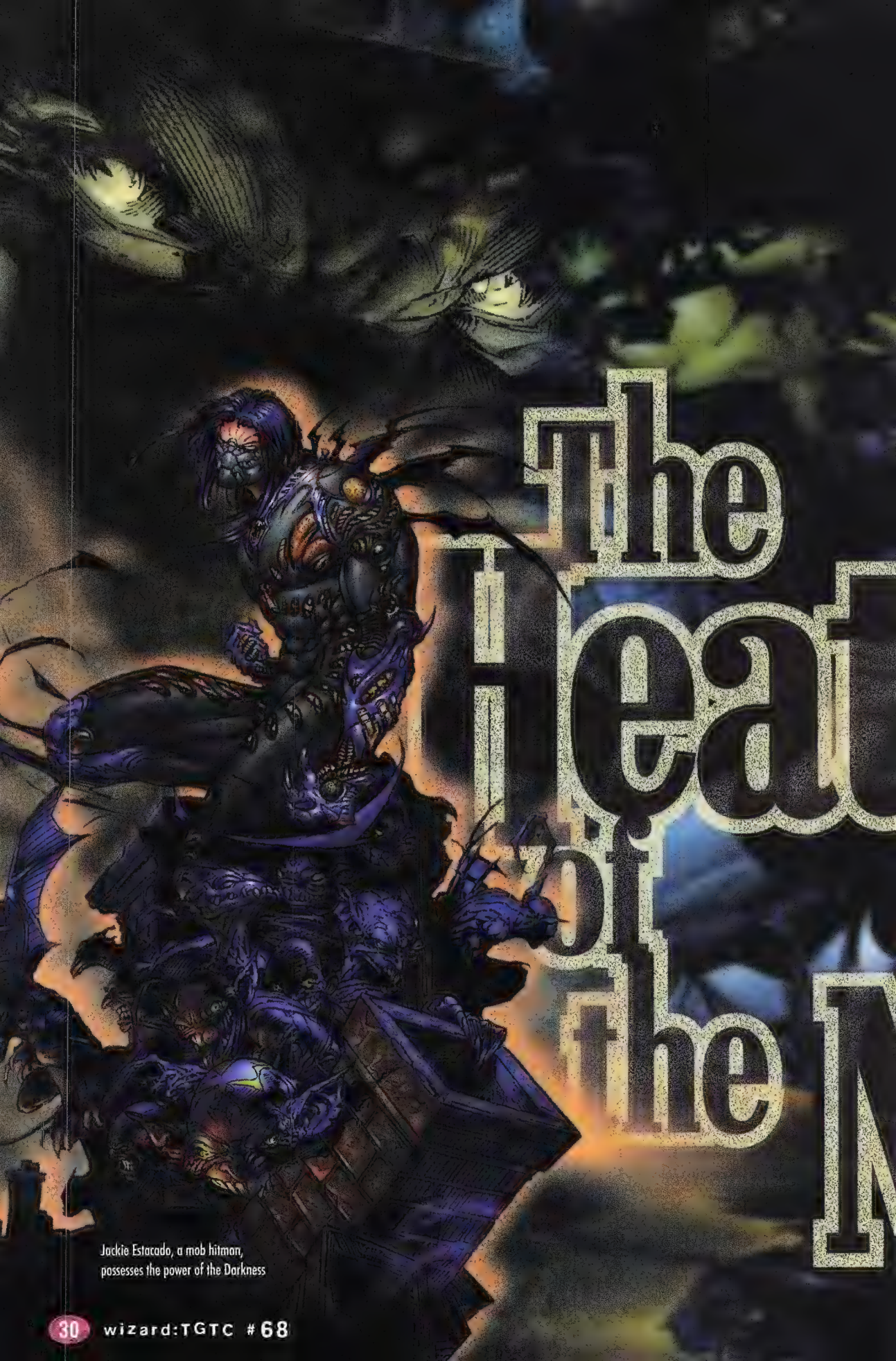


Jackie Estacado, a mob hitman, possesses the power of the Darkness

TOP COW'S 'THE DARKNESS' DELIVERS ON THE HYPE WITH ITS HITMAN-TURNED-SUPERHERO POSSESSING THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

"THE DARKNESS is a little more sophisticated than the standard superhero book," says series co-creator Marc Silvestri. "Readers have demanded a little more—and I think we've been able to deliver on it."

Only a few months out of the gate, *The Darkness* joins fellow Top Cow offering *Witchblade* as the company's latest monster hit, selling out its first two issues. So, it's probably no surprise to Silvestri that his teaming with the popular Northern Irish writer Garth Ennis could provide just the right blend of bullet-flying action, twisted humor and dynamic visuals that've made fans clamor for this exciting new title, now finally hitting the stands after months of hype.

The Darkness is the story of Jackie Estacado, number one hitman and womanizer for the New York City-based Franchetti crime family. When Jackie reached age 21 at the climax of *The Darkness* #1, he unleashed the Darkness, a vast ancient power transferred from father to child at the moment of conception, ironically killing the father in the process. "The very moment the egg meets the sperm, he dies and the power is passed on," laughs Silvestri. "It's the ultimate in STDs [sexually transmitted diseases]. We're really trying to tell a cautionary tale here."

According to Silvestri, it was Ennis, with his penchant for mob stories, who brought Estacado's crime roots to the table when Silvestri first pitched him *The Darkness*. "There are certain people you have to let run with things because you trust their abilities, and I trusted Garth completely," says Top Cow's founder. With great critical success on DC/Vertigo's *Preacher* and a hit-in-the-making with DC's darkly humorous *Hitman*, Ennis was the perfect man for the job of fleshing out Silvestri's original concept.

"The way Garth blended Jackie into the Mafia and gave him the anti-hero persona—making him completely amoral, but likable at the same time—really worked for me when I read it. So I said, 'Okay let's do it,' " admits Silvestri. And they did, creating the Darkness, which made its first mention in Ennis' *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* mini-series for Top Cow (predating *Darkness* #1 by six months), and later showed up with Jackie Estacado wielding the power in *Witchblade* #10—which doubled as *The Darkness* #0. And it's all been downhill from there as *The Darkness* #1 and #2 have hit the Top 10 comics lists like bullets.

LIVING LARGE with fast cars and faster women, wiseguy Jackie Estacado discovers that "he's a hitman who's basically been given the ultimate weapon to do his business," says Silvestri. "He can wreak any kind of vengeance. He can accomplish anything." While Jackie could certainly take care of himself before gaining the Darkness, now that's he got the power, the sky's the limit.

"It's going to take him a while to see what he can do with it—the reader will learn about the Darkness power as Jackie learns about the Darkness power," says Silvestri, who prefers slow roll-outs in his stories to snag—and ultimately keep—readers' interests.

Just what can the Darkness do? The real question is, what *can't* the Darkness do? "The thing about the Darkness is, ultimately, Jackie can create anything with it—but how effective those things are, depends on his knowledge of them," offers Ennis. "He can create goofy little goblins with sharp teeth and sharp claws that can rip people apart, just as he can create tentacles or tendrils of the Darkness that can strangle people to death, because they're simple biological forces."

For readers, these goblin-like "Darklings," which have accompanied Jackie on his adventures, provide a lighter side of the awesome power of the Darkness—and that's one ingredient Silvestri feels is key in the success of the title. "They're the darker side of Jackie's personality," he says. "His worst nightmares brought to reality. But they'll become comic relief. My favorite thrillers would always have a good blend of horror, excitement and dark humor—and that's what we're trying to do with *The Darkness*."

Beyond his partners-in-crime, Jackie will learn that the Darkness ultimately affords him the opportunity to make even more destructive weapons. "If he wanted to make something a little more complex out of the Darkness, he'd have to know exactly how all the components act together to make the thing work. He can make a gun, because he knows how to break a gun down into its component parts—

BY SCOTT BEATTY

whether or not he could make bullets for that gun is another matter," says Ennis.

"But the second anything he's created hits sunlight, it'll dissolve," adds Silvestri.

The ultimate test of Jackie's abilities, though, is learning how to create a woman. With a power that will kill him and be passed onto his heir the moment he conceives, Jackie's possession of the Darkness isn't exactly a dream come true. Jackie's solution: Use the Darkness to create a woman that can't get pregnant. "He's going to try to create a one-night stand for himself," says Silvestri. "He's going to screw it up, and it's going to be a nightmare for him."

"That's really the way he sees out of his terrible, terrible dilemma—but that would take a long time of poring over biology textbooks," adds Ennis.

So then why doesn't Jackie just use contraception? On this point, both creators agree. "No contraception is 100 percent effective," says Silvestri. "This is going to piss him off more than anything. He really lives for the thrill of the chase. There's no thrill in [creating women], because they'll do anything he says."

RAGING HORMONES aside, Jackie will find himself pulled in two directions by other ancient forces desiring to either control the Darkness or destroy it. He'll be facing off against the so-called Darkness Queen and her Angelus warriors. Manifested from the Darkness itself, the Darkness Queen and her sisters (first introduced in *The Darkness* #1/2) oddly enough operate out of Manhattan's Chrysler Building and lord over powerful Angelus warriors. But the Darkness Queen's real origins and goals remain an enigma, as does her control of the Angelus warriors. "Where the Darkness is traditionally an evil power, the Angelus is more an angelic thing. They're traditional enemies," says Ennis. For readers' sake, Silvestri notes that this mystery will be solved after issues #5 and #6.

On a closer front, Jackie has to keep an eye out for the manipulative Sonatine and the Brotherhood of Darkness (a shadowy cult based beneath the Statue of Liberty), and in doing so, enter the ranks of the good guys. "We'll have someone who's just beginning to explore the idea of doing the right thing with this frightening dangerous power. [He'll be] resisting temptation and the influence of various people, like the Brotherhood of Darkness, who want to remake the world in their own image with the aid of the Darkness. So Jackie really has a very dangerous road to walk in those terms," says Ennis.

And though the path might be treacherous, it is one that Ennis will only walk until issue #6, when the writer will fulfill his obligation to *The Darkness* and leave the book to reduce his weighty workload. (Replacing him as of issue #7 is the *Witchblade* writing team of David Wohl and Christina Z.) But the writer is confident that he's helped Jackie towards the path of light. "By the time I finish this, I want Jackie to come to a decision about himself—he's not just going to be a bad guy anymore, and he sees he has a purpose in the world to do a bit of good," says Ennis.

"I'd love Garth to stay on forever," says Silvestri. "As long as Garth's here, I'm going to enjoy the ride, and I'm going to keep enjoying the ride when he's gone. *The Darkness* has a great foundation already, and we have no intention of disappointing anyone. This book has a certain flavor to it that I won't ever let go away." W

If Wizard staffer Scott Beatty had the Darkness power, he'd descend upon Taco Bell with a whole can of whup-ass and force 'em to start serving ketchup.

Fatal Attraction

TALK ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL TENSION

Fans of *The Darkness* already know that Darkness wielder Jackie Estacado and Sara Pezzini (a.k.a. Witchblade), set off more than their fair share of sparks in their first meeting. But will these Top Cow cuties ever hook up romantically? Don't bet on it.

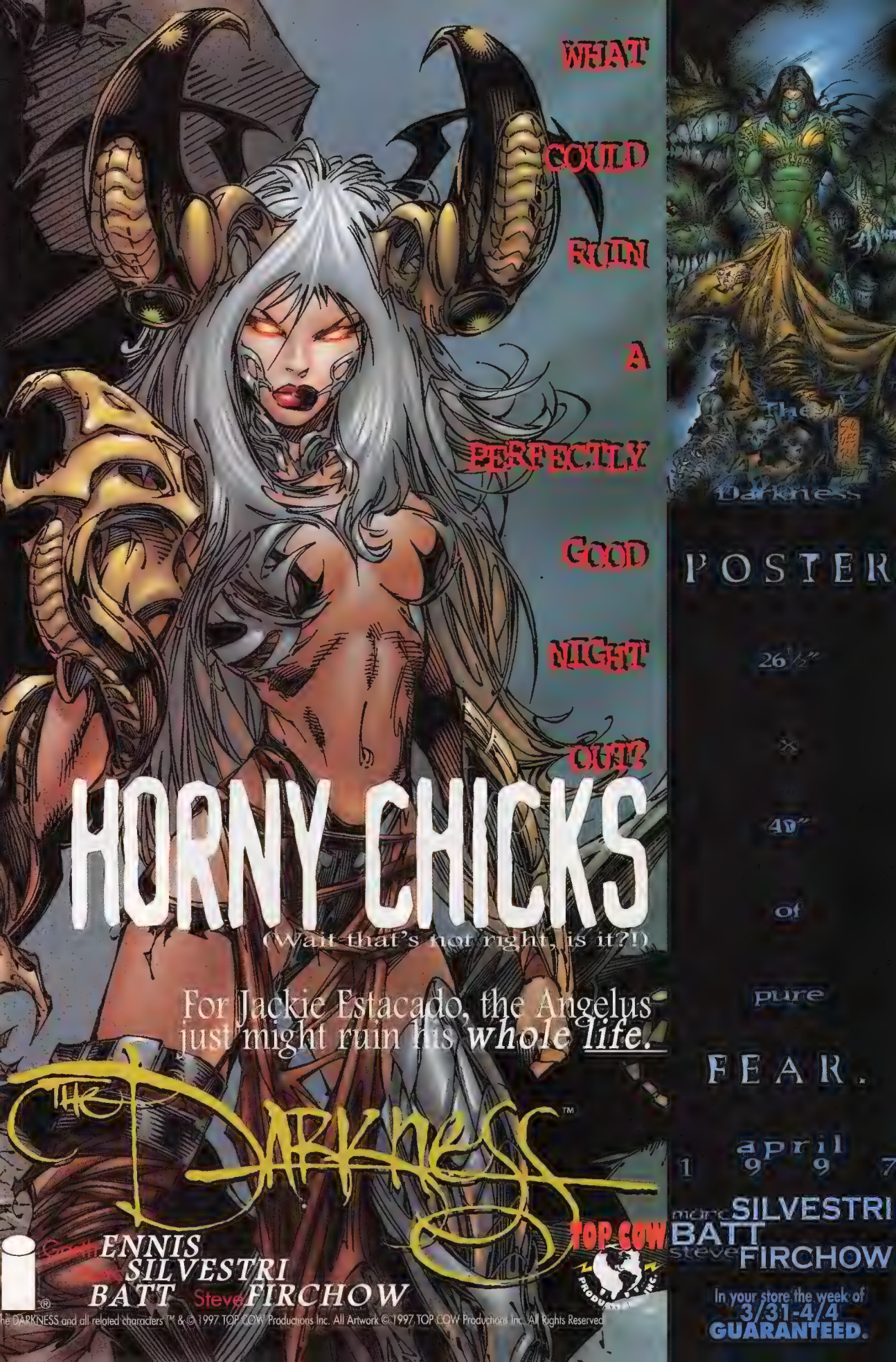
"Long ago, one force was created to defend against the other," says *Darkness* and *Witchblade* co-creator Marc Silvestri. "They both share an ancient origin. In fact, some believe they were created to destroy each other."

Already a hot item on readers' crossover-wannabe lists since their first pairing in *Witchblade* #10, another Darkness/Witchblade teaming seems almost inevitable. Will it happen? According to Silvestri, it almost seems a certainty. "I don't really consider that a crossover as much as a natural occurrence, because there is such a connection," he says.

And the connection between the two characters just got stronger. In the wake of *Darkness* writer Garth Ennis' departure, Top Cow has handed over the title to the *Witchblade* writing team of David Wohl and Christina Z. with issue #7. The planned collision between the two characters is slated for this October (officially known as "Witchblade Month") and November ("Darkness Month").

And what would happen if Jackie met Sara again—would they destroy one another or perhaps fall into a passionate embrace? (We already know what *that* might mean for Jackie!) "You don't really know which way it would go if they met each other again," Silvestri reveals wryly. "Maybe both. But only one can be number one." ■*SB*

The conflict between Witchblade (front) and The Darkness is inevitable


WHAT
COULD
RUIN
A
PERFECTLY
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OUT?
HORNY CHICKS
(Wait that's not right, is it?!)
For Jackie Estacado, the Angelus just might ruin his *whole life.*
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Garth ENNIS
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CABLE GUY

X-Man, Marvel's most powerful teenager, holds the key to the world's destruction

By Matthew Brady

Above: X-Man is one of the survivors of the "Age of Apocalypse" reality
Opposite: The alternate reality version of Mr. Sinister explains how X-Man was created—but can he be trusted?

Okay, let's get this straight: X-Man comes from an alternate reality Earth, he's a surrogate version of someone who already exists in the Marvel Universe, and on top of that, he may one day be responsible for the destruction of our reality.

Sound complex? Not to *X-Man* writer Terry Kavanagh. "To me, Nate Grey is the simplest character in that he's just a teenager thrown into a complex situation, who's trying to survive."

Well, maybe. But this other-worldly version of Cable is Earth's most powerful teenage hero, with abilities including telepathy and telekinesis at frightening levels. And those powers of his will soon become too much for his frail mutant body, ultimately threatening to consume the globe. Other than that, the kid's all right.

How'd Nate get here? Well, *that's* kind of complicated. Nate is one of the survivors of 1995's mondo-popular X-Men event called "The Age of Apocalypse." In it, the X-Men's reality was radically altered when Prof. Charles Xavier was murdered by a time traveler in the past, long before he created the X-Men to uphold peace between humans and superpowered mutants. This change in status quo led to a present world dominated by the evil mutant Apocalypse, where a genetic war between humans and mutants ravaged the entire planet. In this dystopian world, Nate was the creation of that world's version of the evil mutant Mr. Sinister, who told Nate he melded the DNA of his world's Cyclops and Jean Grey to make him. (But since Sinister is known to lie, Nate doesn't quite believe anything he says.)

Somehow Nate managed to escape that alternate Earth just before its destruction at the conclusion of "Age of Apocalypse," and landed in our little reality. Since he's been here, he's made some pretty big waves in the mutant scene. He's butted heads with both Cable and the X-Men, and battled Professor X—at that time, the world's strongest telepath—to a standstill. He also befriended a certain Jean Grey clone named Madelyne Pryor—a former X-Men foe, former Goblin Queen and someone formerly assumed dead.

But the friendly, yet confused Madelyne didn't stick around for long. In her search for her full potential in power, she disappeared from Nate's life to join the Hellfire Club's reformed Inner Circle. Nate bounced back, though, by finding a new squeeze, the mutant thief known as Threnody, who is also a former spy for this world's Mr. Sinister. They moved to New York City together, where Nate spent his time in Washington Square Park helping common folks by giving advice and an occasional telepathic push to help them solve their problems. Things were looking pretty good for our X-Man, but alas, his happiness wasn't set to last.

The final blow came in *X-Man* #25. That's when Nate found out that Madelyne Pryor, his one true friend and confidant in this universe, was nothing more than a creation of his powerful mind. When Nate first appeared in our reality, he subconsciously reached out for comfort, and in doing so, he unknowingly created a copy of his supposed mother, Jean Grey. But a copy had already existed in this world, namely Madelyne Pryor, whom he resurrected and gave a good portion of his power to in the process.

Nate, Jean, Threnody and Madelyne duked it out in issue #25, resulting in Threnody's being out of commission, and Nate losing his telekinesis but maintaining some of his telepathy. While this comes as a great blow, Nate has other things to worry about.

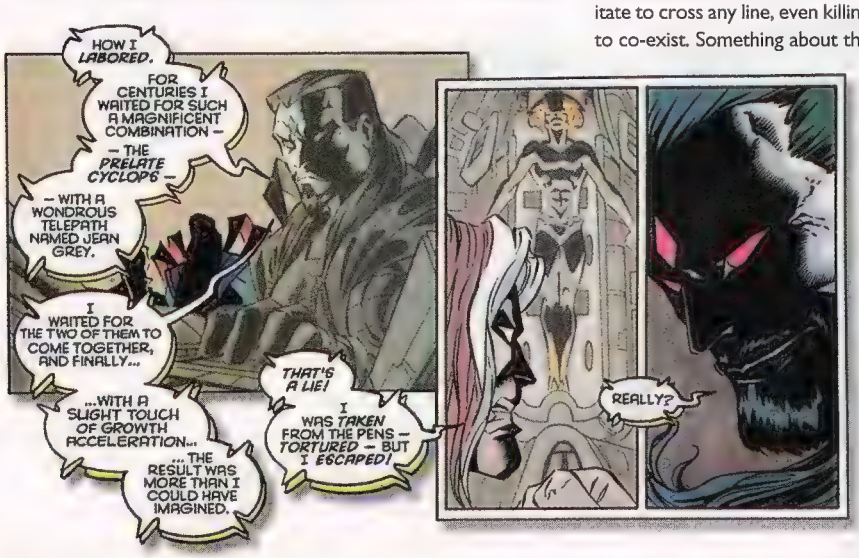
The revelation that Nate created a sentient being out of sheer force of will raises serious implications that both he and Jean—since she is the only one who knows he can do it—will be forced to confront. You see, the last time someone created a being out of the powers of mind, a fella by the name of Onslaught exploded onto the scene, resulting in the supposed deaths of Marvel heavyweights like the Fantastic Four and Avengers. Pretty ominous, huh?

Since his explosion onto the "normal" Marvel mutant scene, Nate has been approached by the X-Men on numerous occasions to join their merry band, but instead of embracing them as the closest thing to a family he could find, Nate has repeatedly rejected their offers, sometimes violently. The reason behind this is simple, Kavanagh explains. Asking Nate to join a group formed to fulfill a dream after the horrors he's seen is akin to asking a survivor of Bosnia-Serbia to join a group that would talk out the problems of the two nations.

"It's not that he's afraid of the team thing, he was a member of a traveling circus troupe in his world," Kavanagh says. "Nate's problem is that he doesn't find the X-Men's approach realistic, especially in the wake of Onslaught. He just can't take the X-teams seriously."

Unfortunately, since he can't throw in with the X-Men, Nate starts looking at other approaches to human/mutant co-existence, including those taken by Havok's new buddies, The Brotherhood. "Nate will get some help with his powers from The Brotherhood," Kavanagh says. "Unlike the X-Men, The Brotherhood doesn't hesitate to cross any line, even killing, in order for mutant and human to co-exist. Something about that approach appeals to Nate. He may draw the line at killing, but that's something he'll have to discover as he goes along."

While Nate is trying to find his way in this brave new world he now calls home, he's come to realize that's he hasn't quite left the Age of Apocalypse behind. Thanks to his enemy Sugarman (who also mysteriously made the jump from the AoA world to "our" world), Nate journeyed back to the alternate Earth that was ruled by Apocalypse in last December's *X-Man '96*.



While there, Forge revealed to him that Nate had journeyed back several times, trips that he apparently will take in his future. Kavanagh hints that these trips will have consequences. "There is a point to the trips," Kavanagh says. "Nate will realize that he may have had more to do with the 'Age of Apocalypse' than he realized."

Since his return to our world following *X-Man '96*, Nate's decided to search out this world's Forge. As with most things in Nate's life, this search isn't a good time for anyone. "While he was at Muir Island, Nate asked Moira to call Forge, and when she tried, she's told that he was dead," Kavanagh says. "Thanks to his powers, however small, Nate knows that Forge is alive somewhere, and as far as he knows, Moira is lying to him, which adds to his distrust of the X-family."

As for home and happiness, Nate seemed to have both, but also seemed to lose them as well. Following *X-Man #25*, Nate found himself wandering again, away from New York's Washington Square Park, where has was acting as a street preacher, helping those more desperate than he. While Kavanagh stresses that Nate will return to New York eventually, all will not be as he left it. "When he comes back, Nate will find that his preaching had more of an effect than he realized," Kavanagh says. "Whether he wants to keep preaching or not, there will be a demand for him at that point."

Speaking of New York and its people, Nate's new friendship with Peter Parker (a.k.a. Spider-Man) is something that Kavanagh wants to see grow and develop. "While Nate may be a hell of a lot more powerful than Peter, there's a lot he can learn from Peter about responsibility," Kavanagh says. "Not that Nate's not responsible, he just doesn't feel the great power/great responsibility thing as strongly as Peter. In this sense, Nate's relationship will be more with Peter than with Spider-Man."

Helping him to start making other friends is the fact that Nate is slowly losing the baggage that he's carried with him since his arrival—his preconceptions of people in this world based on his experiences with their alternate versions in Apocalypse's world. Sinister, Siryn and Jean Grey for example. No one is the same here as they were there. "More and more, he's realizing that the people aren't living up to his expectations, good or bad," Kavanagh says. "They're not worse or better, they're just very different. That's one of the reasons he's not rushing into this Forge thing, and another reason why he's staying clear of the X-Men."

Curiously, Nate's reluctance to accept the X-Men is mirrored by some X-Men readers who are staying clear of *X-Man*. Despite the fact that X-Man is a member of the most successful comic family of all time, Kavanagh explains that the book still carries a "bastard son" feel, and some fans are having trouble warming up to it. This is most evident when every time a new thread starts up on the Internet about the rumored death of an X-Man, Nate's name tops the list. Kavanagh doesn't mind, however.

"The 'outsider' feel of the book is definitely part of its appeal to a lot of people," Kavanagh says. "The X-Men have that outsider feel, even among the other heroes of the Marvel Universe. X-Man is the next generation of the outsider among the outsiders. A lot of our readers like to work their way into the Marvel Universe by way of these outsider characters, so that really is part of the character's appeal."

Nate has a lot to learn about his new squeeze Threnody

Looking into Nate's future, Kavanagh hints that issue #25's resolution will eventually lead to Nate making a sacrifice to resolve the issue of his powers overwhelming both him and the planet.

In the meantime, Nate may soon be forced to bury the hatchet between him and the X-Men, and finally help the group out. "Issue #29 is going to have a very different spin than previous issues," Kavanagh says. "As the story goes now, Nate will be privy to knowledge about a significant X-Men event, and will be the only person who can do something about it. After that issue for the next year, Nate's sole motivation, focus and drive will be to save one X-Man from himself, something that will prove to be the greatest challenge Nate's ever faced, in our reality or his."

When Matthew Brady, who profiled Wonder Woman elsewhere in this issue, tried drawing a family tree for ol' Nate Grey, his head just plumb exploded.

Nate and Peter Parker have more in common than they thought

THE GREAT X-CAPE

The Return to the 'Age of Apocalypse' Game

HOW TO PLAY: It's easy! You play the role of X-Man, that lovable mutant scamp who, after fleeing the nightmarish alternate-reality "Age of Apocalypse" and spending some time in the "real" Marvel Universe, has decided that maybe the horrific world of his birth wasn't so bad. In fact, it's downright preferable to all the weird crap goin' on in today's Marvel U.

So anyway, you begin play on "Start" with 10 sanity points and must navigate your way through the Marvel Universe, choosing any direction an arrow may be pointing (but never going *against* the direction an arrow indicates) and subtracting sanity points as you go. If you ever hit 0 sanity points, BAM!, consider yourself a vegetable and game over, man.

YOUR GOAL: To return to the "Age of Apocalypse" with at least 1 sanity point intact.

START
Brace yourselves...

"THEY HAVE THE DEATH PENALTY IN NEW YORK, RIGHT?"
All of Marvel continuity was sideswiped by a turd-rocket, when the Spider-Man we've known for 20 years turns out to be a clone. That is, until sales dropped faster than the price of Marvel's stock, all the Spider-Editors involved exited stage left and the new official statement is "just kidding."
Lose 2 sanity.

"SOOO...WANNA GO BEAT UP THE MELTER?"
Wonder at how all the good villains (one of the driving forces behind superhero comics, y'know) like Venom, Magneto and Sabretooth have become heroes.
Lose 2 sanity.

"SWEET MOTHER OF GOD!"
Either say the following X-Man origin out loud without drawing breath or lose five (count 'em, FIVE) sanity points. If you can swing it, lose only one sanity point and move on. "Hi, I'm from an alternate reality where I was created by an alternate-reality Mr. Sinister (who says he combined the DNA of alternate-reality versions of Cyclops and Jean Grey to create me), and I'm also a veritable clone of Cable, who isn't exactly a copy of me because in the normal Marvel Universe, baby Cable was transported into the future because he contracted the Legacy virus and stood a better chance of survival with futuristic medicines only to come back to the present to stop his other clone (named Stryfe) from destroying the world (and, by the way, Cable's the son of *this* reality's Cyclops and an evil clone of Jean Grey, the latter of whom was created by this reality's Sinister 'cause he wanted to create a guy like me who would have powers vast enough to take down this reality's Apocalypse, who, like Sinister and many other evil-mutants-before-they-become-good-guys, wants to dominate the world with his zany mutant armies)."

"SO, DID THEY SHOOT THE WRITER?"
Iron Man's history gets rewritten so he's an alcoholic thanks to Kang's manipulations. Then he goes nuts, murders some Avengers and gets killed by his time-displaced younger self. Or something. Lose 2 sanity.

"WHY IS THERE A STAPLE IN THIS TOILET PAPER?"
Inadvertently pick up a cheap knock-off book like *Force Works, Thunderstrike* or *Fantastic Force*. Lose 3 sanity.

"IS 'ANTI-CLIMATIC' HYPHENATED?"
Prof. X turns out to be the X-Traitor. Lose 2 sanity.

"WHEN DID CLAREMONT START WRITING X-MEN AGAIN?"
No X-storyline can be resolved within a three-year window.
Lose 1 sanity.

"THEN HOW DOES HE SMELL?"
Terrible! Hahahahaaha...*ahem*. Anyway, you find Wolverine's nose. Lose 3 sanity.

"WAS THERE TONGUE?"
Not that this has anything to do with anything, but it really is weird that Leia and Luke swap spit in two movies and they're, like, brother and sister.
Lose 2 sanity.

"ZOUNDS, SOMEONE HATH LET THE ODINSON PLAY IN CALVIN'S TRANSMOGRAPHER!"
Thor is Thor. Thunderstrike is Thor. Red Norville is Thor. Deborah Norville is Thor. *Thor* is canceled. Lose 1 sanity.

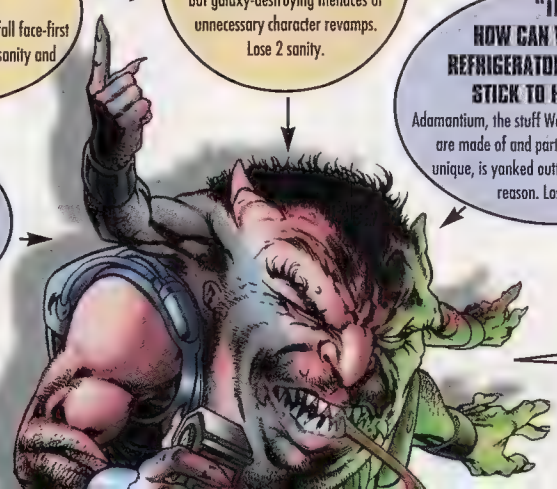
"GUESS HE PAYS FULL PRICE AT THE MOVIES NOW."
Magneto, aside from now being a superhero, has mysteriously de-aged, gained long hair and answers to "Joseph." (Joey to his friends.) Lose 1 sanity.

"SAY...WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE VANISHER?"
All X-stories can now feature nothing but galaxy-destroying menaces or unnecessary character revamps.
Lose 2 sanity.

"OOO...DID SOMEBODY STEP IN SOMETHING?"
Trip over the New Universe and fall face-first in a pile of Ultraverse. Lose 2 sanity and go wash yourself.

"THEN HOW CAN WE GET THE REFRIGERATOR MAGNETS TO STICK TO HIS HEAD?"
Adamantium, the stuff Wolverine's bones and claws are made of and part of what made him so unique, is yanked outta him for no apparent reason. Lose 2 sanity.

"WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER."
Two words: "Heroes Reborn."
Lose 3 sanity.



HEY, WELCOME BACK TO THE "AGE OF APOCALYPSE." NOW GIMME SOME SUGAR, BABY!

Shock IN

By Matthew Brady

The Dragon (above) is usually the victim of Erik Larsen's twisted tales

reatment

Erik Larsen often crosses the line in his 'Savage Dragon' series... but has he gone too far?

There's not much Erik Larsen hasn't done in *The Savage Dragon*. He's burned the Dragon. He's broken him. He's incinerated his hand and blasted his arms off. He's had God beat the crap out of the Devil. He's shown gory fights that literally soaked pages with red ink. Dragon's been impaled on a steeple, been beaten and had someone punch a hole through his chest. There's profanity like the f-word in the title. There's enough T&A and sexually suggestive scenes to make mothers across the country hate Larsen. And if *The Savage Dragon*'s letter column is any indication, with each new issue, the writer/artist manages to offend yet another reader in some way or another.

Crusading for free speech? Maybe. Pushing the boundaries of good taste? Perhaps. A creative mind run amok? Definitely. But when asked why he goes for the jugular, Larsen just laughs. "I'm just having fun," he says. "While I'm not going all-out in an effort to offend, if I come up with something that's cool, I won't shy away from it. It's one of the benefits of not having an editor. No one's really going to stop me. Generally, I'm just doing comic books and trying to have a decent time doing it, so if something occurs to me that happens to be offensive or twisted as all hell, I'll just go with it in the heat of the moment."

And he hasn't disappointed, so to speak. Every month in Larsen's *The Savage Dragon*, he's literally dragged the green-skinned, fin-headed Chicago supercop to Hell and back.

Take for example, the guest appearance of God (issue #31), the infamous shower scene using creative ways to not show full-frontal nudity (issue #17), Dragon's dream sequence where children are busting out of his girlfriend Rapture's genitalia (issue #28), or the supervillain group called Body Function, made up of Cesspool, Backfire, Nasal Ned and Belcher (issue #25). Twisted-as-all-hell seems to describe the book pretty well.

Believe it or not though, there is a line Larsen won't cross. While he does allow himself an immense amount of freedom when it comes to drawing the human (and sometimes inhuman) body, Larsen draws the line somewhere just shy of full nudity. "Naughty bits. That's what I won't show," he says. "No exposed female nipples, no female or male genitalia. That's where I draw the line."

As for language, Larsen will basically use whatever he deems appropriate, however rough it may sound. Lately, he's had God tell the Devil (on a full splash page nonetheless), "Don't f--- with

Rapture's see-through blouse is so racy, even *Wizard* can't print it

God!" as well as other language that would have most mothers reaching for the bar of soap to do some mouth-washing. "I'll generally use a couple of the seven words you can't use on television," Larsen says. "I'm trying to write realistic dialogue, and I feel that these words are appropriate. The words that I use have been on television and radio in the same context as I use them. I just used a--hole for example, but I used it appropriately."

There is a method to his madness, however. Larsen wants *The Savage Dragon* to be the comic so good you have to hide it from your parents. "It's struck me that comic books have really lost that edge they used to have," Larsen says. "You used to have to sneak comic books into the house, but now, with these horrible video games that have people ripping each other's heads off and pissing down their necks, comics seem pretty tame in comparison. I like the idea of comics having a little more of an edge."

Larsen wants *The Savage Dragon* to have the feel and the edginess of the pre-Comics Code titles of the 1950s, the comics where blood and gore were mainstays. "You didn't want anyone knowing that you were reading *Mad* magazine or some wierdo horror comic, so you'd have to sneak it by your parents," Larsen says. "There was something kind of cool about having that edge, and I think I've got it in the *Dragon*."

Larsen admits that sometimes in the heat of writing and drawing an issue to reach that edge, he does unintentionally cross his own personal line of good taste. "To me, the most objectionable thing I've done was the first issue of the ongoing series, just because there was so much blood all over the place," Larsen says. "When you're inking and just dealing with black ink, you can just go crazy, but when you see it after it's all been colored [red], you realize that all that black stuff was blood, and there's an awful lot of it. Oh my."

While it may seem contradictory to some, Larsen admits he feels differently about putting sexually suggestive and extremely violent scenes into *The Savage Dragon*. "Personally, I would much rather see naked people than dismembered people any day," Larsen jokes. "I'm not really into splatter-gore and crap like that...although if the situation arises that it seems like a good idea at the time, all bets are off!"

While Larsen will never shy away from putting suggestive or potentially offensive scenes in his comic, he has started issuing two versions of some issues, one with the naughtiness, one without. For example, issue #31 shipped with two covers, one with the plain Image "i" in the upper left-hand corner and one with "God is Good" written in the Image "i." In the "God is Good" issue, God doesn't use the f-word. The different versions are something, Larsen jokes, he does to please his wife.

"So now on new comics day, I can say, 'Look honey, the new comic came out. Nothing objectionable here!' " Larsen laughs. "The real reason I do it is so that all the issues aren't returnable, since I didn't solicit issue #31 as the 'God Says F--- Issue.' While some retailers will get slightly upset about it, people gravitate to the objectionable version, and then the retailers find themselves calling Diamond to reorder *Dragons* with the f-word in it."

Of course, with each new potentially offensive scene or word, Larsen gets letters. Some polite, some, well...ruder than the offensive scene in question. "God versus the Devil [issue #31] got everybody a little worked up, but not as much as I would've thought," Larsen admits. "I got my first scripture-quoting letter because of that issue, and that was from somebody who wasn't buying the book regularly, but because God was going to be in it, they went out of their way to buy it, so hey...it worked!

"Actually, I don't know what I could've done that wouldn't have offended that person. I treated the whole issue with a fair deal of restraint. I could've had the Devil beat God, or God just not exist. Would that have been better?"

Although Larsen receives the occasional angry letter, they're few and far between. He admits that he's pretty much scared off the concerned parents groups and highly conservative comics readers. "Generally, the peo-

Religious commentary or just having fun? Larsen's "Don't f--- with God" issue caught fans unaware

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"It's struck me that comic books have really lost that edge they used to have."
—Erik Larsen

ple who are reading the book are on the same wavelength I am, and don't feel all weirded out by the stuff I put in it," Larsen says. "I get a few cranky letters now and then, but other readers and I take them in stride. We're just trying to enjoy ourselves here."

Larsen admits that he does get some letters that upset him, those from younger readers who have told him that their parents have found the issue with an objectionable scene in it, and they now forbid them from buying the series anymore. "Those are the letters that I feel pretty bad about," Larsen says. "I didn't mean to go that far, I'm sorry. But at the same time, I'm not putting anything in the book that they wouldn't see on television or hear while hanging around with their friends."

Something else that motivates people to write in and complain about the comic is the fact that kids see the "Savage Dragon" cartoon on the USA Network, and then pick up the comic book, which has a bit more of an adult tone than the cartoon. "While a lot of the people who see the cartoon don't really know about the comic, there are some parents who will find the comic and buy it for their kids," Larsen says. "Then I usually get the letter saying that they couldn't believe there was a shower scene with Dragon and Rapture [#17], or God said the f-word. With the cartoon on, I really don't feel any obligation to cater to the kiddie crowd with a toned-down *The Savage Dragon Adventures* with cartoony artwork. I know there are people out there who feel that's irresponsible, but…f--- 'em."

Larsen does admit though that he's started thinking about toning the book down just a little. "I've got to start being a little more careful about what's on the front cover and the first page, because a lot of times, that's all the parents will look at," Larsen says. "Parents will look at a cover and say, 'Oh, that's nice dear, there's the Dragon ripping some guy's lungs out, and he's soaked in blood,' which for some reason is more acceptable than, 'Gosh, that girl's got awfully large knockers.' "

Along with playing the role of controversial comics creator, Larsen occasionally has to wear another hat: controversial businessman. Shortly after launching *The Savage Dragon* regular series, Larsen adopted the "Highbrow Entertainment" imprint, whose icon was a small caricature of Larsen's head designed to poke fun at Dark Horse's "Legend" imprint whose icon is an Easter Island head. With all the recent changes in the comics market, Larsen has recently dropped the imprint. "With all the people leaving and joining Image, it seemed time to show readers that I'm not going anywhere," Larsen says. "I'm going to stick with the company that I helped form, so rather than looking like I'm trying to popularize some brand name, I'm just dropping it."

The decision to drop the Highbrow name came when Larsen helped Colleen Doran move her independent comic, *A Distant Soil*, under the Image Comics umbrella. "It seemed really inappropriate for me to be putting a little Erik Larsen head inside a book where someone else had created all the characters, and is writing and drawing it as well.

"The imprint and logo served whatever purpose it had, maybe to show that there were some people out there who were getting a little bit silly and pretentious about what they were doing. I see things like *Barry Windsor-Smith: Storyteller*. Jeez. Come on, aren't we all doing that, telling stories?"

Since his sponsorship of Doran's *A Distant Soil*, Larsen has also helped Jae Lee bring his *Hellshock* back to Image after a long hiatus. While these moves may seem somewhat uncharacteristic of Larsen, diversifying the

Backfire is but one of *Savage Dragon*'s unsettling cast of characters

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Image Comics line turns out to be something he feels very passionately about. "It's very important for me that Image Comics isn't just this company that does superhero books," Larsen explains. "As times change, people move in and out of the company, and a lot of the ones that move in aren't bringing what people think of as traditional Image books with them. I want Image to be known as a company known for putting out a wide variety of good comic books—period. The more good comic books that I can help bring to the table, the better."

With his unique take on comics, and the relatively low profile he maintains, you may think Larsen feels like a square peg in the round hole of the industry. Not really. "I think everybody else is," Larsen says. "I really think everybody ought to like doing their job as much as I like doing mine. It seems that a lot of people are drawing comics until they can get into doing storyboards for movies, or making toys or making movies of their characters. This is all I ever wanted to do—[to] make comics. I don't have any other aspirations than this."

While nit-pickers may point out that there is a somewhat mediocre "Savage Dragon" cartoon series and toy line, Larsen insists that he maintains a very hands-off relationship with both. "People may wonder why I'm not taking more time off to make the "Dragon" cartoon series better than it is," Larsen says. "That's not to say that it's lousy. I don't think it's lousy. I think it's terrible, I don't think it's lousy. The reason I don't take time off is because that's not what I got into this business to do. With the show, I've got certain rights, many of which I don't exercise.

"My attitude is: If you like the show, great. I hope you buy the comic. The reason I'm doing the show is to get some cash and continue to do comics. If the industry goes into the pooper, I'll still be able to continue to make comic books."

As a part of Image, Larsen is often overshadowed by his fellow creators who tend to be a bit more media savvy and remain in the spotlight. As you may guess, the lack of attention doesn't bother him a bit. "If I do have one failing, it's that I really don't do promotional stuff," Larsen says. "I don't have a vast studio with guys whose job it is to make sure I'm prominently mentioned in all the magazines and everybody loves me. And it's just as well, because the guys who do are finding out that when books don't sell as well, that's an awful lot of mouths to feed."

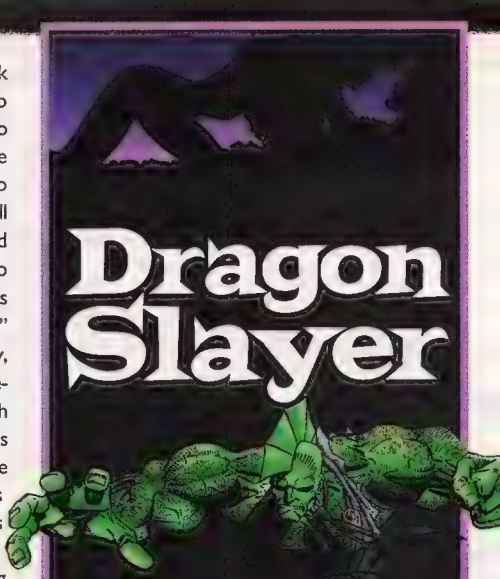
While he may nag on them occasionally, Larsen's relationships with other Image creators couldn't be better. And even though Larsen may not share their philosophies about being in Image, the other founders are still his good friends, and their characters make occasional appearances in the pages of *The Savage Dragon*. For example, Spawn guest-starred in issue #30, something Larsen is still chuckling about. "I had Spawn appear in issue #30, and God appeared in the next," Larsen says. "The sales went way up for Spawn, but came down for God's issue. Todd [McFarlane] has the perfect opportunity to do an ad that says, 'Spawn: more popular than God!' Thanks to my book, he has the solid proof to back up that claim."

As Larsen looks ahead, he's sure he'll be staying with Image for the long haul, publicly stating many times that he'd still be carrying the "Image" name if everyone else left the company.

As for remaining to be controversial and pushing the envelope, Larsen's not sure if he wants to become known as the "dirty old man of comics" in the years ahead. "I suppose that when my kids are old enough to read comics, I may have to say, 'Oops,' and pull things back a little. But for now, I'm just having a great time writing and drawing my book. It's a hoot."

Matthew Brady, a frequent contributor to Wizard, *is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America. Parental guidance is suggested.*

The book's over-the-top violence manages to offend readers every month



Dragon Slayer

"What's coming up in the future of the Dragon?" answers Savage Dragon creator Erik Larsen. "I don't know, I make this stuff up on the fly!"

While it may appear that Larsen is flying by the seat of his pants with any given month's issue, he does have a long range plan. Initially, Larsen announced in his letter column that his goal was 100 consecutive issues of *The Savage Dragon*. He's recently dropped that idea. "I'd like to do 300," Larsen says. "Actually, I want to do 302 just to piss [Cerebus creator] Dave Sim off." (Sim has set an unprecedented 300-issue goal for his *Cerebus* series.)

Despite his joking, Larsen does have a plan for the characters and the story. While the next few issues will deal with the dissolution of Dragon and Rapture's relationship, and Dragon eventually finding a new girlfriend. Beyond that, anything goes. Something that will play a major role in the continuity of the book is Larsen's decision to give the characters birth dates and age them accordingly.

"My intention is that Dragon and Rapture's kid will eventually be the star of this book, but it's going to take a damn long time for him to get old enough," Larsen says. "There might be short stories with him as he gets older, but he'll be out of the picture for a while."

And since his characters are aging and progressing, Larsen warns readers not to get too attached to anyone, even the big guy himself. "It's not inconceivable to me that the Dragon may not be alive by issue #300," Larsen reveals. "The kid may be fully running the show. That's the beauty of owning the book—my plans can change and metamorph. While I do have a fairly extensive file about where I want everyone to go eventually, at this point it's nice not to be moving in a definite direction, and just vamp for a while."

Larsen also adds this inside tip to tell how his future plotlines are developing. "I hate when I have to write solicitations for issues two or three months away, and I have no clue what's coming up," Larsen says. "When I'm really clueless about what to do in an issue, that's when I call somebody up and ask if I can guest-star their character. That's when you can tell I've totally lost it." ■ *MB*

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Wizard *casts the* Generation X *movie!*

Casting call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos by the Everett Collection.

Okay, let's face it: The "Generation X" TV movie kinda sucked. Fans thought so. We thought so. If *Wizard* had to cast a Gen-X flick, we'd have a massive budget so ILM could work wonders with the kids' superpowers. Just imagine, six teenage mutants under the watchful eye of Banshee and the White Queen, two experienced mutants who're no strangers to the X-Men. Add in a strange, but mega-powerful foe and his sidekick, and it'd be a sure hit. As usual, we'd have an all-star teenage cast which would include...

WHITE QUEEN

Rebecca DeMornay ("The Hand that Rocks the Cradle") is perfect to play the once evil, mind–controlling Emma Frost. Put Rebecca in that skimpy outfit the White Queen wears and you'd have every guy in the theater under her control.

BANSHEE

The role of Banshee needs a level-headed, leader type of guy. Throw an Irish accent on British actor Ralph Fiennes ("The English Patient," "Schindler's List") and we've got our man.

JUBILEE

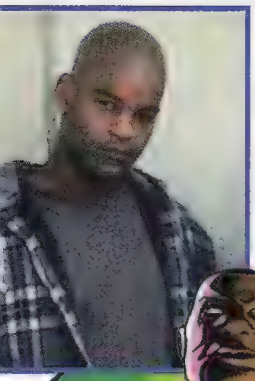
For the tough pyrotechnic Jubilee, we figured we could get away with not using an Asian teen actress. We decided she's got to be played by someone who can pull off an attitude, but also have that soft heart inside. Lacey Chabert ("Party of Five") could manage this, no problem.

M

For the "Ms. Perfect" member of the team, we'd want Rachel True. She's got the looks, and proved she can have a high-and-mighty attitude in "The Craft."

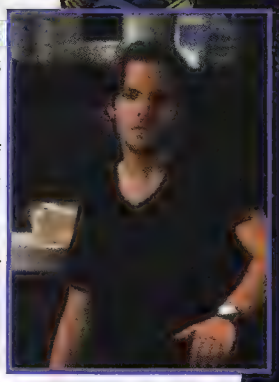
HUSK

Reese Witherspoon is our pick for the nice southern gal, Husk. She portrayed a pretty, sweet and sincere teen in "Fear." Only now, she'd be able to rip her skin off. What more could you ask for?



SYNCH

The good-natured Everett could be played by Vicellous Reon Shannon, who shows *his* good-natured side on the TV show "Dangerous Minds."

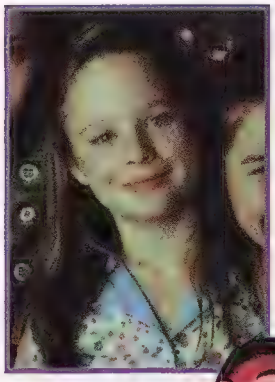


CHAMBER

We'd need a little bit of ILM effects to pull this character off, since his chin and half his chest are nothing but glowing bio-energy. But toss Stephen Dorff ("Backbeat") into the role and we think he'd pull it off nicely.

SKIN

To play Skin, the skin-stretching mutant, we chose Michael DeLorenzo ("New York Undercover") who has hints of Skin's street-smart attitude. Of course, he'd need a little ILM help with his powers, but that's what a big budget is for, eh?



PENANCE

Thora Birch ("Clear & Present Danger") should have a problem with this role. All she's gotta do is on some red makeup, a super-sharp red outfit ar look real scared and secretive. And since Pen doesn't talk—no memor any lines!

MONDO

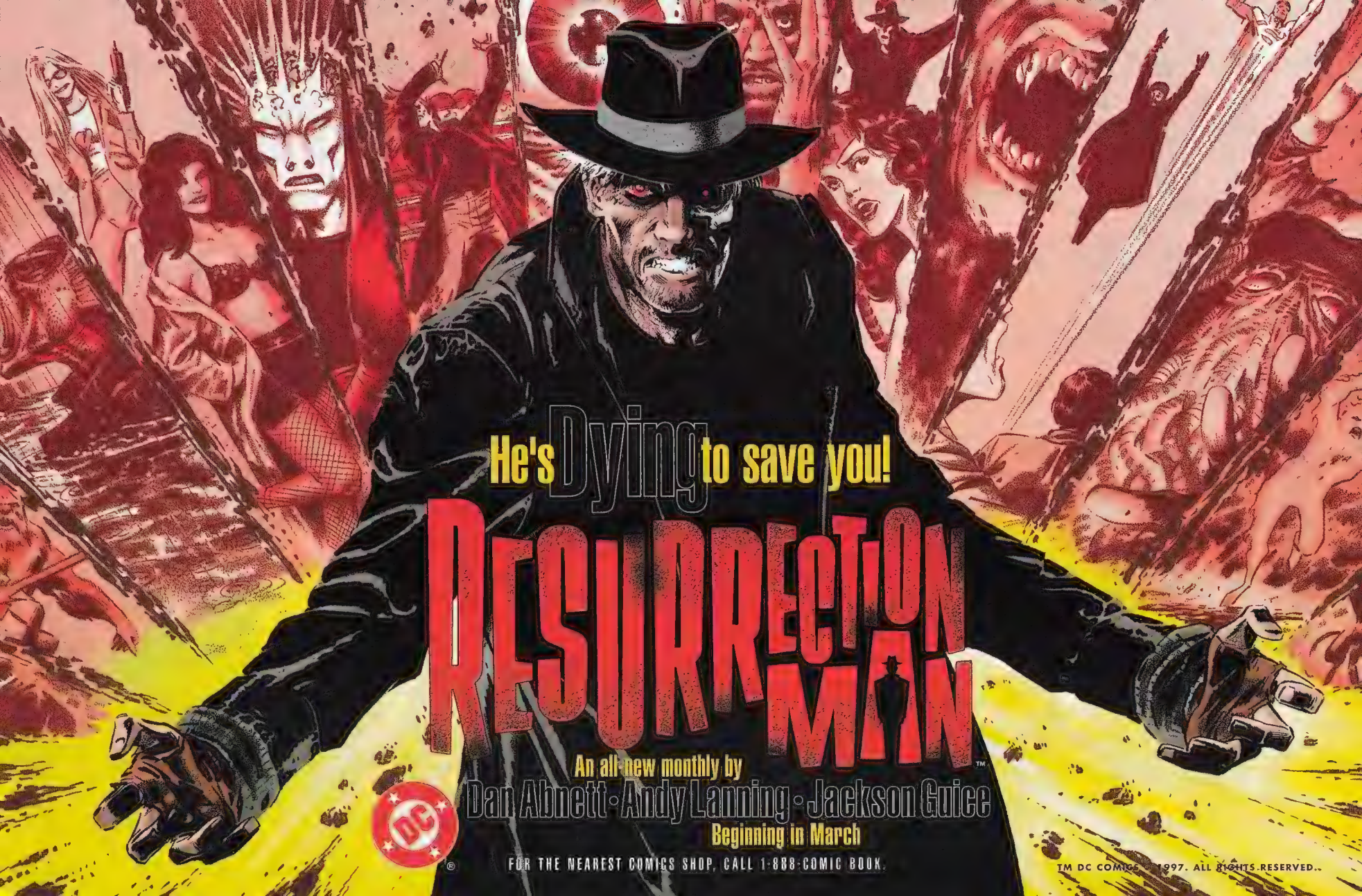
Mondo's the fat kid of the team. He's an easy-going guy who likes to eat and can turn into whatever he can absorb. Shaun Weiss played a similar role in "The Mighty Ducks."

EMPLATE

For Emplate, the bad guy Generation X fights (and M's brother), we'll have ILM supply the body. We'll cast the voice. Andre Braugher ("Homicide") has the deep, scary tone we'd want.

DOA

For Emplate's faithful, ever-smiling sidekick, we need someone who can sound like a sniveling worm. Andy Dick does this weekly on "NewsRadio." 'Course, ILM'd have to make him into a midget... W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RISING SUNS

A GUIDE TO 1997's MAJOR MANGA RELEASES

THIS PAGE: *Robotech* flies again in March

"Chicks with big eyes!" "Insect robots having sex!" "The stories move too fast! Aaagghhh!"

Hey, calm down. If those are the only things you think of when you hear the word "manga" (a.k.a. Japanese comics), then you don't know manga. And we'll prove it. What we've got gathered here is a listing of most of the major manga releases throughout 1997. We called up all the major publishers of manga in America, and asked them what they have coming up in the next nine months or so, just to see how they sound to your fanboy ears. So without further adieu, here's a preview of 1997's manga!

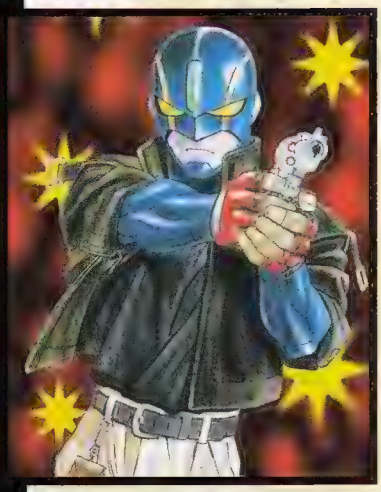
BY MATTHEW BRADY

Blade of the Immortal: Call of the Worm

From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Three-issue mini-series in April-June
By: Hiroaki Samura (*Blade of the Immortal: Blood of a Thousand*)
What You Should Know: Samura's *Blade* saga has been attracting attention since the debut of the first *Blade* mini-series, *Blood of a Thousand*, late last year. The *Blade* saga tells the story of Manji, a master-less samurai who is granted immortality, and then quickly finds out it's not all it's cracked up to be. In order to regain his mortality, Manji has to kill 1,000 evil men. So start counting…

Manji's run across his share of weirdos and bad guys since his wanderings began, including Kuroi Sabato, the warrior poet who sews the heads of his victims onto his own shoulders. All together now, eeeewwww!
What's Gonna Happen: Hmmmm, let's look at the ingredients. A rogue samurai. And he needs to kill 1,000 evil men. Two words for *Call of the Worm*: body count.
The Inside Scoop: While the *Blade* story sounds simplistic, Samura's detailed, kinetic art style makes each issue a mini-masterpiece by itself. Samura's characters blend the disciplined, mannered lifestyle of feudal Japan with street-tough, amoral villains that current comic readers will find familiar. Not for the faint of heart, the series promises a strong story with great characters and some of the best art you've ever seen. By the way, the series will feature pin-ups by Gene Ha, Terry Moore, Paul Grist and Stan Sakai.

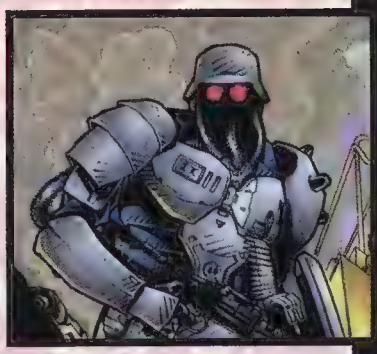
One other interesting tidbit is that each page of art, unlike most manga, isn't flipped over to read left to right (the Japanese read from right to left). Instead, the individual panels on each page are reshuffled to read left to right.
Similar Tastes: If you like Frank Miller's *Ronin* mini-series, the '80s manga series *Lone Wolf and Cub* or the very first *Wolverine* mini-series, be sure to check this out.



Metal Guardian Faust

From: Viz Comics
Release: Ongoing series starting in March
By: Tetsuro Ueyama
What You Should Know: *Metal Guardian Faust* follows the manga tradition of huge, incredibly powerful armored heroes appearing from nowhere to save the day.
What's Gonna Happen: When young Japanese schoolgirl Rushiha is suddenly attacked by a humanoid robot, another guardian robot appears from nowhere to defend her, which leaves a lot of questions: Who sent him? Where did he come from? When did he come from? And why does he insist on staying at her side at all times? Who or what is after Rushiha anyway?
The Inside Scoop: *Faust* writer/artist Tetsuro Ueyama is one of the next generation of manga artists who's earning quite a rep in Japan. He was recently the runner-up for the Fujiko Fujio Award, presented by Shogakakukan, Japan's top comics' publisher.
Similar Tastes: If you like traditional superhero comics starring Spider-Man, Superman or X-O Manowar, be sure to check out *Metal Guardian Faust*, which features the adventures of a lone hero fighting against incredible odds to protect innocents from harm.

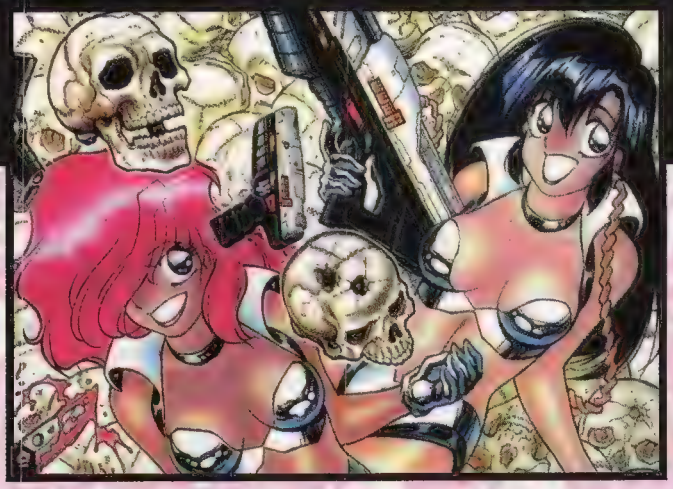
Hellhounds: Panzer Corps TPB



From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Trade paperback collection in June
By: Mamoru Oshii and Kamui Fujiwara
What You Should Know: *Hellhounds: Panzer Corps* is the story of an elite police division, formed with the resources and firepower to deal with the new breed of criminal that has developed in post-apocalyptic Japan. To the government, they're heroic guardians. To the people, they're armed thugs. Now, a newcomer to the Hellhounds finds himself caught between the fearful people he's sworn to protect and the murderous revolutionaries he's sworn to stop.
The Inside Scoop: The anime ("Japanese animation") steam that produced "Ghost in the Shell" in 1996 has set their sights on *Hellhounds: Panzer Corps*, and is planning on turning the story into a full-length, animated feature due out late this year.
Similar Tastes: If you like superhero-type stories with a military twist, like *StormWatch*, *Cyberforce*, *WildC.A.T.s* and '60s issues of *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* written and drawn by Jim Steranko, be sure to pick up *Hellhounds*.

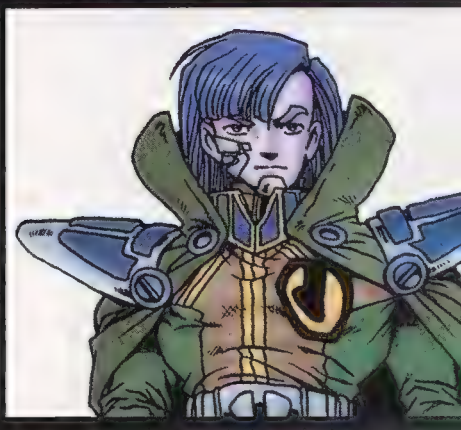
What's Michael?

From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Three-issue mini-series from April-June
By: Makoto Kobayashi
What You Should Know: This series is about a whole bunch of similar tabby cats, all coincidentally named Michael, seen in a variety of situations and adventures. They're always the quiet observers of human nature and mute witnesses to our triumphs, tragedies and everyday life.
What's Gonna Happen: Instead of telling one long story, *What's Michael* will tell short stories featuring different cats around Japan in a variety of situations. *What's Michael* features cartoon cats, but with a different twist—there are no thought balloons from the animals telling the reader what's going on in the animals' minds.
The Inside Scoop: Michael is, simply put, Japan's version of Garfield, Heathcliff and Krazy Kat all rolled into one. While the styles of Michael and his American counterparts are very different, Japan is nuts for its cat hero, with over 10 million copies of *Where's Michael* in print, and a whole slew of Michael products, Japan is a nation that's pretty crazy over its favorite tabby cat.
Similar Tastes: If you like any of those American cats like Garfield or Heathcliff, be sure to check this out. *What's Michael* will also appeal to fans of books like *Gon* and *Bone*.



Dirty Pair: Dangerous Acquaintances

From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Trade paperback collection in June
By: Adam Warren with Toren Smith (*Dirty Pair: Fatal But Not Serious*)
What You Should Know: In the distant future, there exists an organization known as the World Welfare Work Association (3WA), the toughest force against intergalactic crime. 3WA operatives Kei and Yuri (a.k.a. The Lovely Angels) are the best the force has to offer, and always get their man. Unfortunately, they also have a reputation for catastrophe as well, and in the course of their assignments, have leveled cities, continents and even planets. While they've always been cleared of responsibility, they've earned themselves a new nickname—The Dirty Pair.
What's Gonna Happen: The Lovely Angels have finally earned a well-deserved vacation on Rocinate, a planet celebrating its 25th year of independence. However, the Pair's rest and relaxation is cut short when Kei spots Shasti, their old partner gone bad, and without hesitation, sets out to capture her. Since Shasti is a genetically-engineered super-agent for the 3WA who betrayed the Pair many years ago, the Dirty Pair are out for one thing: revenge!
The Inside Scoop: *Dirty Pair: Dangerous Acquaintances*, while featuring Japanese manga characters in an all-new story, is written and drawn by American creators Toren Smith and Adam Warren. Warren has been credited with helping to bring the manga look to many American comics.
Similar Tastes: If you like *Gen^{13}*-style action mixed with humor, be sure to check out *Dirty Pair*. Fans of *Gunsmith Cats*, *The Mask* or *Lobo* are also recommended to pick this one up.



Drakuun: Rise of the Dragon Princess

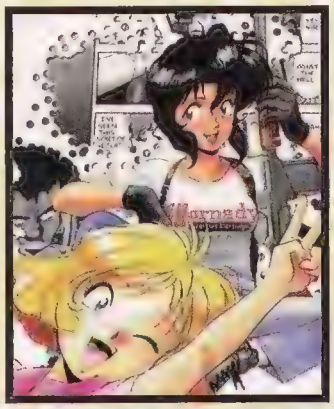
From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Six-issue mini-series from February-July
By: Johji Manabe (*Caravan Kidd, Outlanders*)
What's Gonna Happen: *Drakuun* is a warrior fantasy featuring a bold, beautiful and, um, healthy female warrior that bad girl fans will find familiar. In *Rise of the Dragon Princess*, Warrior Princess Karula Olzen leads the nation of Ledomiam in battle against the evil Romunilian Empire. The stories are filled with action, humor, romance, wild machines and incredible characters, both human and inhuman. Known for a kinetic, energy-filled drawing style, the *Drakuun* epic is something that can best be described as: *Alice in Wonderland* meets *Lady Death* meets World War IV.
The Inside Scoop: The entire *Drakuun* saga will be told in three complete mini-series. *Rise of the Dragon Princess* kicks off the saga, with the remaining two mini-series rounding out late 1997 and 1998.
Similar Tastes: Readers who like books with a mix of action and humor, like *Domino*, *Vampirella* and *Lady Death*, will probably get a kick out of this series.

Inu-Yasha

From: Viz Comics
Release: Ongoing series starting in April
By: Rumiko Takahashi (*Ranma 1/2*)
What You Should Know: Set in two time periods at once, *Inu-Yasha* combines legend and reality as a young modern-day girl gets stuck in feudal Japan to meet a young dog-boy (he has dog ears), and the adventures begin!
What's Gonna Happen: The story begins when Kagome, a Japanese schoolgirl, is thrown back in time to feudal Japan, which is in the midst of a civil war. Once there, she runs into legendary human-insect monsters and fearful villagers, all intent on killing her. Only by finding the strange dog-eared boy will she be able to find her way home. And even then, will it be enough?
The Inside Scoop: Viz Comics will debut *Inu-Yasha* in English before the first run of the series has been compiled into a graphic novel in Japan, something that makes Viz a company to release a translated version of manga nearly simultaneously with its release in Japan.
Similar Tastes: For fans of darker comic book adventures with a dash of humor, *Inu-Yasha* will likely appeal to readers of *The Darkness* and *Witchblade*.

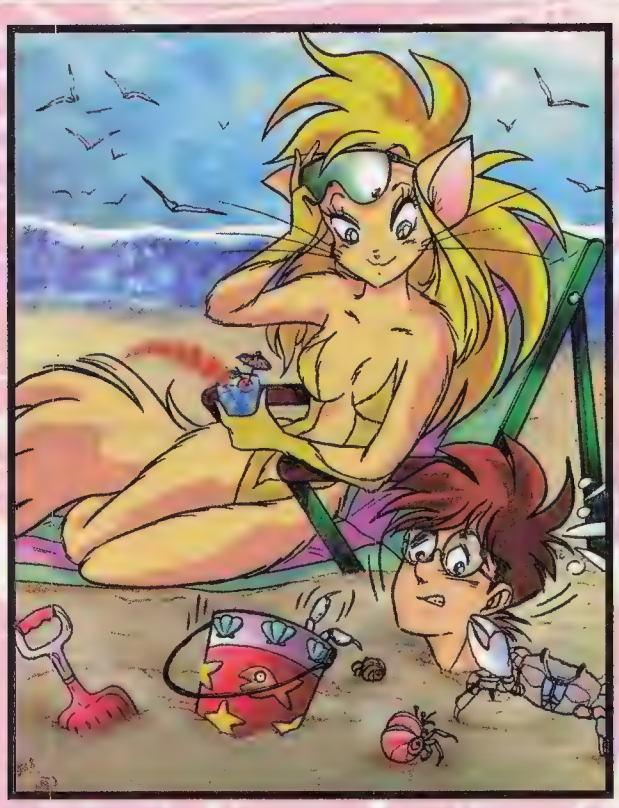
Gunsmith Cats: Shades of Gray

From: Dark Horse Comics
Release: Five-issue mini-series from May-September
By: Kenichi Sonoda (*Gunsmith Cats: Bonnie and Clyde*)
What You Should Know: While the two track down Chicago's most dangerous criminals and low-lifes, female bounty hunters Rally Vincent and Minnie-May Hopkins maintain their cool in all the tough situations. And watch out for that Rally—she'll break your heart with her beauty and innocence. But beneath it all just remember: she can blow your nose off at 30 paces, punk.
What's Gonna Happen: This time around, Rally and Minnie-May are on the trail of a charming con man named Logan. Caught with nowhere to go, Logan decides to play his trump card: the inside information on Gray, the vicious killer who's got Rally in his sights.
The Inside Scoop: Sonoda is commonly singled out as a major influence on manga-esque American comics artists. Hailed by many critics as a master of the sequential art form, Sonoda's action-packed art and writing maintain a movie-like feel throughout the entire comic.
Similar Tastes: If you like *Gen13*, *Dirty Pair* or the mercenary antics of *Deadpool*, this action/adventure series with a sense of humor is for you.



Robotech

From: Antarctic Press
Release: Ongoing series beginning in March
By: Writer Fred Perry and artists Ben Dunn, Pat Duke and Joseph Wight
What You Should Know: In 1999, an alien object of immense size and power crashes on Earth. From its remains, the people of Earth redesign and reconstruct the ship into the *SDF-1*, a craft that will finally be able to take humans from Earth to the farthest star. However, just before it's maiden flight, violent aliens called the Zentraedi attack, forcing the *SDF-1*'s crew to use the ships' untested technology, which accidentally transports the ship beyond the orbit of Pluto, and the adventure of *Robotech* begins.
What's Gonna Happen: For now, *Robotech* adventures will slowly weave together the story of the *SDF-1*'s crew, and how they must learn to come together to fight the Zentraedi who have set their sights on the Earth and its people.
The Inside Scoop: Even though the original Japanese animated "Robotech" series has been adapted to comics several times, this time Antarctic Press publisher (and *Robotech* artist) Ben Dunn insists this time the series will be " 'Robotech' done right!" For now, Antarctic plans to keep expansion of the *Robotech* line very limited during 1997, allowing the company to keep the book's quality as high as possible, but plans are in the works to expand the series to include events from the classic anime adventures "Robotech: Southern Cross" and "Robotech: Prototype."
Similar Tastes: If you like the anime "Voltron," sci-fi series "Babylon 5," or hi-tech stories with plenty of military action, adventure and intrigue, be sure to check this one out.



Reality Check

From: Sirius Entertainment
Release: Ongoing series (issue #7 ships in March)
By: Rosearik Rikki and Tavisha Wolfgarth
What You Should Know: In the year 2012, a virtual Internet exists which can be accessed via link-up helmets. A young boy named Colin Meeks regularly accesses the 'net to escape his dull family, but had no idea what was in store for him. But one night, his cat Catreece slept under the Internet helmet link, and became an intelligent, fun-lovin' part-human/part-cat being on the 'net (off the 'net, the cat's just an ordinary cat). Now Colin's life is far from dull. On the 'net, Colin and Catreece have all kind of adventures, from exploring the virtual world to stopping the dreaded Puffy Cat virus.
What's Gonna Happen: Expect each issue of *Reality Check* to mix a healthy dose of humor with adventure, keeping with the title of the book. Look for a rabbit named Ridgi to show up on the virtual 'net; an escapee from a video game who works to keep the 'net in order; along with an Internet fool named Rankle Chick, who thinks he's from the moon of Eurpoa and is always accompanied by a three-legged cat named Pumpernick. Also, Loopy, the 'net's first 10-year-old superhero, who showed up to fight against the Puffy Cat virus will hang around as well. Plan on seeing many more goofy characters showing up as time goes on.
The Inside Scoop: The idea for *Reality Check* came to Rikki and Tavisha when the two were working on *Robotech* for Academy Comics, and were looking for something to do on their own. The Internet was hitting it big right about then, and the two wondered what things would be like if a cat somehow got on the Internet. The two spent an entire year plotting events out before putting out the first issue as self-publishers, and soon after joined Sirius Entertainment.
Similar Tastes: If you like quirky, fun books like *Impulse*, the WB cartoon "Freakazoid," or anime like "Sailor Moon" or "Marmalade Boy," be sure to seek this book out. W

Matthew Brady, who interviewed controversial Erik Larsen this issue, has to kill 1,000 evil enemas to regain mortality. So start counting...

RENT CHECK

For the complete Japanese experience, it's always a good idea to check out the animated version of Japanese comics: anime. Remember when all your friends were talking about the "Ghost in the Shell" flick last year, and you thought they were talking about an old Police album? Don't stay in the dark any longer! Here are anime videos coming to a video or comic store near you soon.

- **Crusher Joe (AnimEigo)**—Crusher Joe is the leader of the Crushers, an intergalactic team of troubleshooters who are hired to take the jobs no one else will touch. All out action with a rough edge. (Also available are "Crusher Joe: The Ice Hell" and "Crusher Joe: Last Weapon Ash.")

- **Cutey Honey (ADV Films)**—The battle android with more curves than the Autobahn is back! The one-woman S.W.A.T. team takes on cybernetic senior citizens, mutant motorcycle gangs and crazed female killers.

- **Dirty Pair: Flash (ADV Films)**—Our two galactic gals are at it again (see mainbar for who they are).

- **Fire Emblem (ADV Films)**—Before recorded history, when gods ruled the Earth, a lone mercenary named Mars leads his people in a fight for freedom.

- **Gude Crest (ADV Films)**—Based on the Sega game, this sword-and-sorcery saga pits two women against a ruthless baron and his evil goddess.

- **Key: The Metal Idol (Viz Communications)**—"Key" tells the story of a robot girl who has to make friends with 30,000 people. Uh...good luck.

- **My Neighbor Totoro (Disney)**—A charming fable where two girls encounter a forest spirit...and adventure ensues.

- **Street Fighter II V (pictured above) (Manga Entertainment)**—The "V" is for victory as this English adaptation of the popular Japanese TV series follows the early adventures of Ken and Ryu, characters in the super-popular video game.

- **Ushio & Tora (ADV Films)**—A series about a boy and his demon trying to rid other worlds of other demons. ■ *MB*

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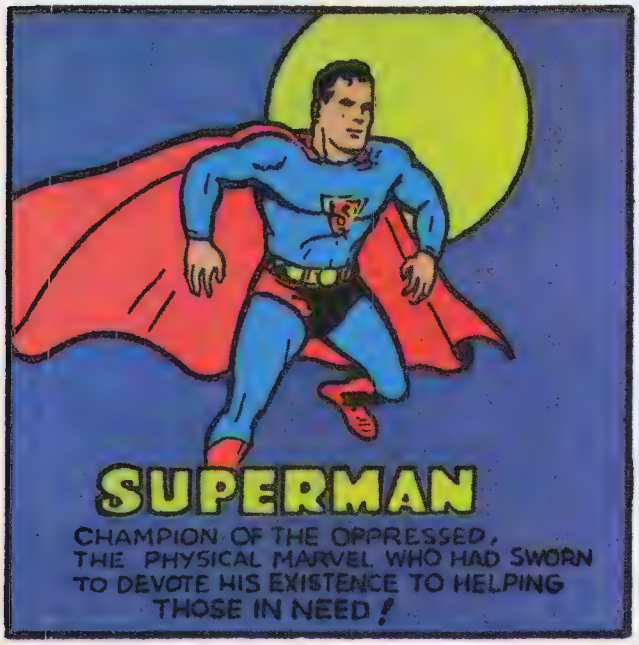
MAKING Change

WITH SUPERMAN'S CONTROVERSIAL NEW LOOK CREATING HEADLINES, ARE REVAMPS WORTH THE UPROAR?

BY CRAIG SHUTT

"How dare you do that to my favorite hero?!"



It's the battle cry of the long-time fan whenever their favorite character is revamped or altered. And there's been a lot of that going around lately. To cite a few recent examples: the Spider-Clone saga which replaced Spider-Man with a double of himself; an all-new Green Lantern blazing onto the scene; and "Heroes Reborn," which relaunched Marvel's core heroes from ground zero. And those are just to name a few.

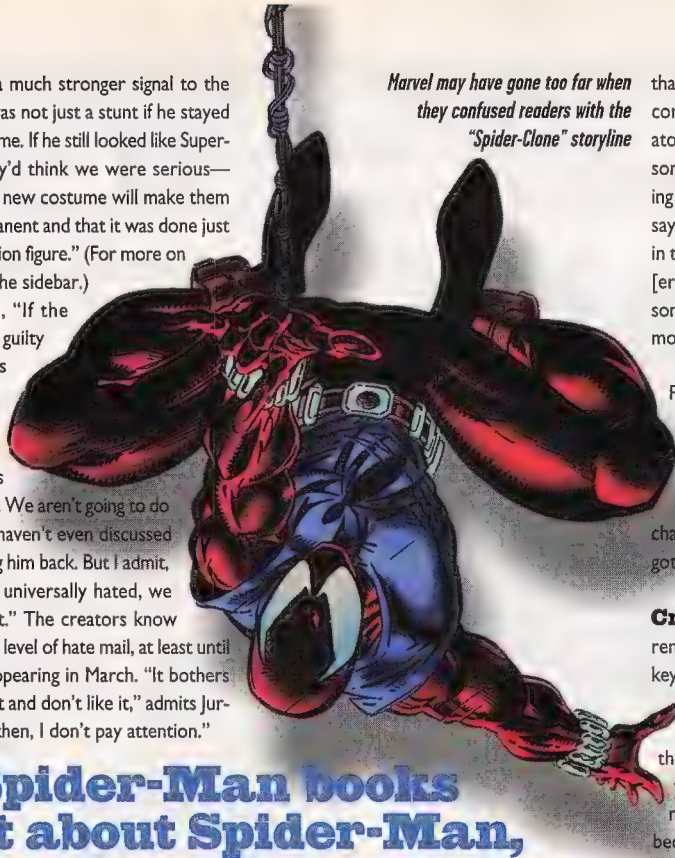
The latest alteration? None other than the Man of Steel himself, as the Superman creative team is braced for the fan reaction with their December 1996 announcement of a new costume and new powers to debut this March.

And very often, the battle cry is heard with good reason. Character changes and revamps inevitably bring howls of outrage from the moment they're announced, with fans charging that editors and creators don't understand what makes a character great. Indeed, revising comics characters is more art than science, with no two makeovers done the same way for the same reason. Making it work is especially difficult, editors and creators say.

"How do you keep these characters from going stale over 30 years?" asks Dennis O'Neil, the Batman group editor for DC Comics who supervised the breaking of Batman's spine back in 1993, leading to a new Dark Knight and renewed Bat-mania. "There's no template to follow. We just keep making our best guesses with a base of craftsmanship. It's never a decision I undertake lightly."

"I thought it was a much stronger signal to the readers that this was not just a stunt if he stayed in his original costume. If he still looked like Superman, I figured they'd think we were serious—which we are. The new costume will make them think it's not permanent and that it was done just to create a new action figure." (For more on the costume, see the sidebar.)

Adds Jurgens, "If the Superman team is guilty of anything, it's doing strong stories that ultimately revert everything back to the status quo when they end. We aren't going to do that this time; we haven't even discussed the idea of changing him back. But I admit, if the changes are universally hated, we can always bail out." The creators know they're in for some level of hate mail, at least until the books begin appearing in March. "It bothers me if people read it and don't like it," admits Jurgens. "But before then, I don't pay attention."



Marvel may have gone too far when they confused readers with the "Spider-Clone" storyline

"The Spider-Man books aren't about Spider-Man, they're about Peter Parker, his life and the complications that are caused by being Spider-Man... That got lost on whether he was the real Spider-Man or not."

—Marvel editor Ralph Macchio

And if fans are asking, "Why change a character like Superman?" Dooley notes that revampings occur for one of two reasons: Either character sales and/or appeal have waned...or a creator pitches a new direction with specific angles that offer better potential. In the case of *Green Lantern*, the editorial powers asked for changes, and in fact rejected Dooley's first proposal as not being dramatic enough. In the case of another of Dooley's titles, *Aquaman*, writer Peter David says he proposed a new concept of darkening the former sea king and replacing his left hand with a sawed-off harpoon—and the Powers That Be blinked.

"We had to do a major selling job to convince them that we weren't going to screw up the character," David says of the change that boosted Aquaman's credit rating with fans. "We had to show that we really had creative concerns in mind and that we weren't desperate to do something to goose sales. It was a first-hand look for me at how scrupulously they care about their characters."

But David doesn't agree that changes are made solely when a character has been played out and sales are dipping. "That implies that there's no such thing as another interesting direction to take."

In fact, there are many ways to revamp a character. You can change the person in the costume, as was done temporarily with (among others) Batman, Iron Man, Captain America and Spider-Man...and more permanently with Green Lantern, Flash, Green Arrow and Supergirl. You can change their outlook, as was done with Hal Jordan (the former Green Lantern who became a villain called Parallax), Aquaman and Hawkman. You can change their name or costume, as DC did by updating the original Robin into Nightwing, and as Marvel did with Jim Rhodes replacing Tony Stark as Iron Man, both occurring during the early '80s. Or you can reboot the character by starting over from scratch, as was done by writer/artist John Byrne with Superman in 1986 and plotter/artist George Pérez on Wonder Woman in '87, both with a great deal of acclaim. Last year, Marvel fueled mixed feelings among fans with its "Heroes Reborn" relaunch with *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man*, *Captain America* and *The Avengers*.

But the "Heroes Reborn" creators stress that often revamps take characters back to their core. In fact, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* re-creator Jim Lee says his approach was to flesh out some key parts, not throw things away. "Nothing I did was done capriciously or maliciously," he says. "Both the FF and Iron Man are stories told in the 1960s, and the origins were rooted in that [era]. There was nothing wrong with the personalities involved, I just wanted to update their motivations to the 1990s."

Adds *Captain America* and *Avengers* front man Rob Liefeld, "My goal was to make these characters interesting to kids today and give them the same excitement I felt about them when I was reading them. I wanted to give them a contemporary feel, while putting back into [the characters] the sense of grandeur that somehow got lost along the way."

Creators and editors agree that remaining faithful to the character's core is the key to a successful revamping. That doesn't mean past smaller evolutions were wrong, Macchio points out. "If you don't try different things, the character becomes schtick," he says. "So you naturally try to evolve the character and move him forward so the concept doesn't become stale. The problem is that sometimes it moves too far away, and someone has to come in and yank it back."

The problem with the Spider-Clone storyline, Macchio says, is it led Spider-Man away from his essence. "The Spider-Man books aren't about Spider-Man," he explains. "They're about Peter Parker, his life and the complications that are caused by being Spider-Man—the guilt and responsibility and fun that these powers have brought into his life. He's very real—with a very human cast of characters. That got lost in the focus on whether he was the real Spider-Man or not."

But the core characteristics aren't always easy to nail down, notes Karl Kesel, who helped usher Daredevil back into the wise-cracking hornhead of the Silver Age. "My favorite Daredevil is the Stan Lee/Gene Colan version [from the Silver Age]," he explains, "and I wanted to recapture that feel." But, he notes, readers who first experienced the Frank Miller *Daredevil*—written and drawn during the 1980s—have a different feel for what lies at Daredevil's essence. "Frank's version plays up the crime elements much more, and many think that's the one that works best."

The new Green Lantern developed from the character's core too, says writer Ron Marz. "In any revamp, you have to focus on the character's basic tenets, without getting bogged down in the details that don't retain the essence." He and editor Dooley agreed that GL's core revolves around the ring and an unlimited imagination—and that got lost with Hal Jordan as the ring-slinger.

"The feeling was that Hal had been mishandled for quite awhile and was beyond reclamation," he says. "I think Hal could have been saved in some fashion, but it wouldn't have had the

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New Duds, No Dud

You thought killing off Superman was a big deal? Try changing the Man of Steel's costume...now *that's* caused a load of commotion. From *Newsweek* to "Saturday Night Live," the new costume's reviews have run the gamut from being blasted to receiving a mix of curious "Holy costume change, Batman!"-type clichés.

But who cares what *they* think?

We decided to cut through the bogus opinion polls and ask the *real* comic fans through an open poll on our "Wizard World" site on America Online. We wanted to know first-hand what you had to say about Superman's new duds and his energy-based powers (and maybe a general question on revamps...). You might be surprised by the results.

Do you like the new costume?

YES 67%	NO 33%

Do you like his new powers?

YES 52%	NO 48%

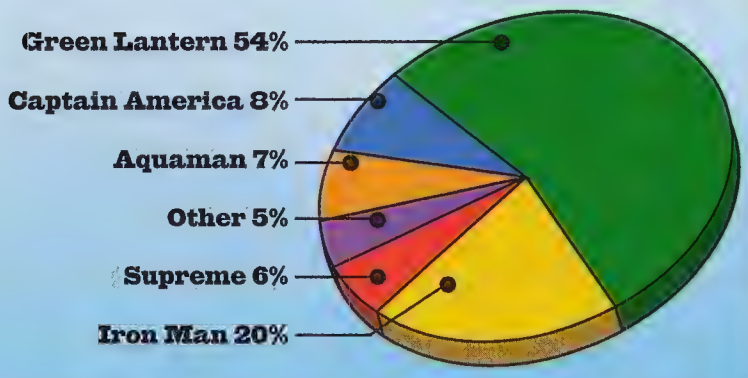
While many fans could accept a new costume on Superman, there was a huge controversy over whether you should alter his powers. Many fans are sad to see the old powers go, but others are very curious to see how the new powers will make Superman more powerful. "Everybody should be entitled to change their clothes," posted one fan, "but it's tough to accept a power change."

Do you like the fact that even an icon like Superman can undergo change?

YES 76%	NO 24%

"Would you change the American flag?" asked one fan in the minority. (Actually, as more states were added to the Union, the flag was being constantly changed.) It seems most fans agree that icons can change as long as they remain true to their character. "He's still Superman," said another fan. "I don't know why everyone is going crazy, because he still stands for the same beliefs like truth, justice and the American way. As long as they remain true to who he is, they can make him look like the Easter Bunny."

Which recently revamped character do you think was handled the best?



Green Lantern wins by a landslide. Though fans hated the idea of Hal Jordan going loony, they really warmed up to the new Green Lantern, Kyle Rayner. "The story just made it work," said an online fan. "I hated the idea from the start, but I'm glad I gave it a chance because I love Kyle and am now probably the biggest Kyle fan."

The same mentality carried over to the reasoning behind liking other revamped characters. If the story works, then the fans will enjoy it. "Like Green Lantern or 'Heroes Reborn,' you've got to give Superman a chance," said one response. "I have faith. After all, it is Superman and nothing beats Superman!" ■ *Conrad Bain with Victor Tayback*

immediate impact or drawn attention as did creating a new Green Lantern from whole cloth and starting over. The goal was to make the guy in the suit as interesting *as* the suit. It's all a crapshoot, and as the writer, you put your best ideas out about why the character has succeeded and hope the readers agree."

Then you brace for the criticism— but you can't pay it any mind, notes Macchio. "We always say the readers are our real editors, but we also can't let them dictate to us," he says. "If you don't throw some curves at them and not give them what they say they want, they'll leave."

Or at least, they threaten to. Dooley says he received many letters in which readers said they were dropping *Green Lantern* because of the revamping. Dooley called some of those readers, to discover that many had stayed or had returned after a few issues. "We didn't expect the old fans to leave, and I'm not sure that many have," he says. "Many threatened to, but they didn't, and I'm glad. It would be pretty stupid to do something that drove away the fans you already had."

"Readers aren't as conservative as we sometimes believe," says Macchio. "They are open to trying new approaches—but you have to prove it to them."

Movie and cartoon versions don't impact the comics versions, all agree. "Movies always change costumes and props, but it doesn't affect what we do," says O'Neil, who has seen three Batman movies play with his characters. "I'm convinced that comics and movies are very different media with different demands. And I'm not sure there's any overlap." Adds Dooley, "Kids don't buy a toy or see a movie and then go buy a comic; it doesn't happen. If they do and see it's different, we hope they stay because of the good story and art. We don't expect they'll be disappointed by the differences. We think they'll be intrigued."

Besides, notes Jurgens, today's kids are used to seeing differences. "My six-year-old son has grown up seeing Batman in dozens of costumes in the toy store," he says. "I'm sure he thinks differently about heroes' costumes than I did at his age. It's no longer a religious occurrence of great magnitude to have a character change his look."

And that's a trend for the better, he adds. "Comics characters shouldn't be treated as something precious. It's true you can screw up a character so bad that you can't get him back. But at the same time, if you're too reverent to something that happened 30 years ago, you're not being fair to the new readers who want to be entertained."

Concludes Kesel, "Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman all have changed many times over the years. Any character worth his salt can be reinvented."

And remember, for every Spider-Clone fiasco, there's a Green Lantern waiting to be unveiled. W

Craig Shutt, who updated us on the "Heroes Reborn" project last month, has had his continuity disrupted many times, usually by mass quantities of beer.

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THE WIZARD Q&A:

Kubert breathes new life into Ka-Zar (right) and his wife Shanna

By Matthew Senreich

After his onslaught on 'X-Men,' Andy Kubert has his sights set on big game with 'Ka-Zar'

ANDY KUBERT HAS JUNGLE FEVER.

And gearing up for Marvel's upcoming *Ka-Zar* series with writer Mark Waid, he hopes it's contagious.

Some would say it's affecting his better judgment. Coming off a six-year penciling run on *X-Men*, Kubert is taking a major risk by leaving Marvel's top-seller, and exposing his career with nothing more than a loincloth.

But Kubert doesn't see it that way. He views it as the challenge of a lifetime—and he's up for it. Is Kubert crazy? Delusional? Or just plain psyched? The 35-year-old artist just flashes that fanboy smile pointing to all the dinosaur and jungle photo references plastered all over his studio walls, along with old Tarzan drawings to inspire him. Maybe not so crazy.

"I think Ka-Zar has got something for everyone as far as action, pacing and superhero-type stuff," Kubert says humbly at his drawing table, buffered from the dizzying pace of his dad's school The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art upstairs.

Jungle fever? You bet. Kubert is a fan's artist, extremely approachable and easily excitable. Whether the topic of conversation is Star Wars, X-Men or Prince Valiant, it's his enthusiasm that is infectious.

And with Coke in hand, I suddenly felt the fever upon me...

WIZARD: Why did you decide to leave *X-Men*—one of Marvel's best-sellers—to work on *Ka-Zar*, a decidedly low profile book?

ANDY KUBERT: It was a tough decision. I have been doing *X-Men* and X-Men-related stuff for the past six years, and creatively, I just wanted to do something else. I guess I felt myself getting stagnant on the book and repeating things over and over again. Six years is a long time.

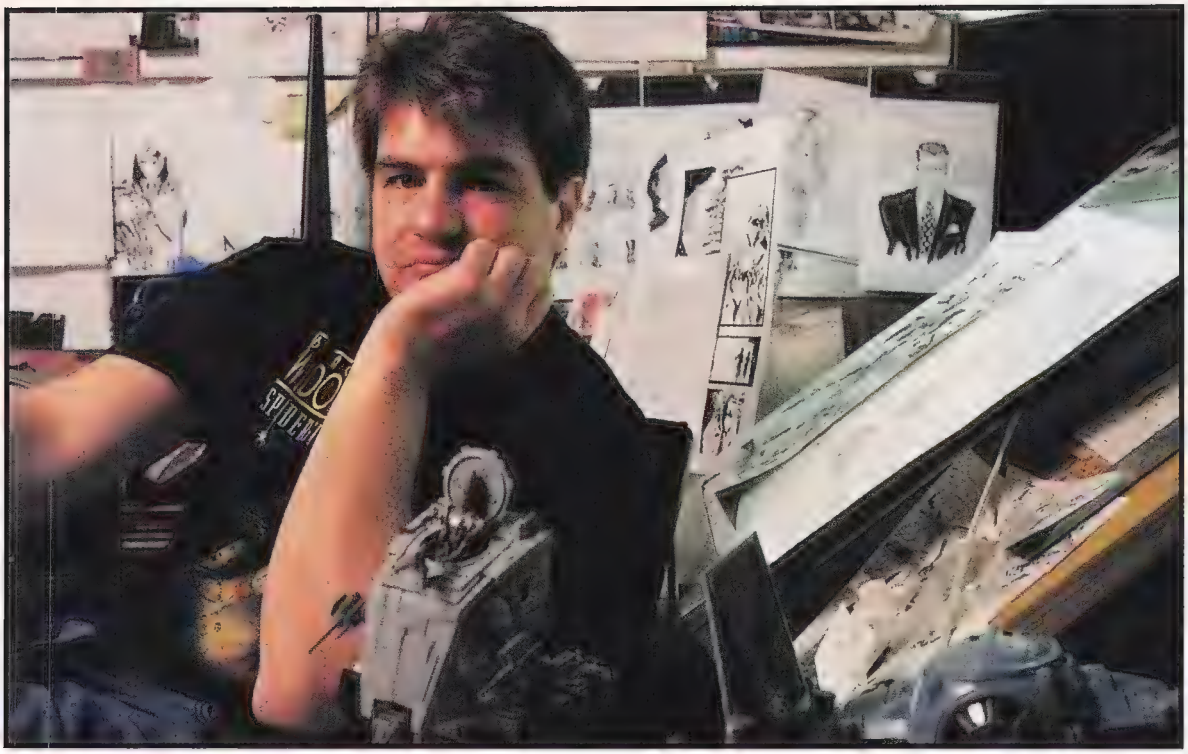
Are you concerned this move may affect your career in any way?

Yeah. I thought about that a lot. I figured someday I was going to have to leave [*X-Men*]. I have a Marvel contract now where I can pretty much do anything I want to do with Marvel's blessing, so I figured while I was under contract, this was the time to give something new a shot.

So why Ka-Zar over say a Spider-Man title?

[*Big sigh*] I don't know. Maybe *Ka-Zar* is more of a challenge. When I got onto *X-Men*, I had to follow Jim Lee [the penciler who started the book]. He is Ultra Guy, someone who is way up there in talent and somebody that sold like a zillion copies of the book. Then here comes me, and I had to follow this guy. It was a very tough act to follow. I wanted to do something now where I wouldn't have to follow anybody. I wanted something that was me and my own. It's more of a challenge. Not that *X-Men* after Jim Lee wasn't any kind of challenge—that was the biggest

Andy Kubert



Vital Stats

Name: Andy Kubert
Occupation: Comic book penciler
Born: February 27, 1962
Base of Operations: The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, N.J.
Career Highlights: Comic book letterer at age 19, a six-year penciling run on *X-Men*, the first *Batman vs. Predator* mini-series (with brother Adam) and now *Ka-Zar* with writer Mark Waid.
If he were a Star Wars character, who he would be: "I look like an Ewok, but I'd like to be the Emperor...I'd like to rule."
Favorite Prehistoric Film: "Jurassic Park"
Favorite Prehistoric Creature: "T-rex. They are big, dopey looking animals and it's a lot of fun to make them look cool."

challenge that I ever had actually—but I just wanted to do something that was mine...totally mine.

But why Ka-Zar?

Mark Waid and I, when we were doing *X-Men* together, really enjoyed working together. Mark said, "Hey, whenever you are ready, let's do something together." So when he left *X-Men*, I was thinking about it and called him up one day. We started talking about [working together], and we talked about the characters that were left [at Marvel after the "Heroes Reborn" deal]. It seemed like all the characters that went to Image were the characters we really wanted to do. Like the Avengers—they would have been a blast to do. So what Mark did was he faxed me a list of the characters that were left and we went over it. I was a big fan of *Ka-Zar* in the '80s, so I said, "Hey, what about *Ka-Zar*?" He said, "Okay. Great."

Why choose to work with Mark Waid as opposed to another writer?

It was just when Mark came on *X-Men*, things clicked with he and I as far as personalities, working relationships and his style of writing compared with what I like to draw. I like to do the fast-paced, action-oriented kind of thing and that is his style of writing. Everything seemed to just click.

Once you and Mark decided you were going to do Ka-Zar, how did the creative process or system work?

Well, I first had to ask Bob Harras for permission. [*Laughs*]

How did that work out?

I was talking to Bob one day and I told him, "Bob, I've been doing *X-Men* for six years." [My brother] Adam was already talking about drawing *The Incredible Hulk* and I guess that got me making the wheels start to turn. So I just asked Bob, "What would you think about me going to do something else? And if I did anything, I want to do it with Mark Waid. So how about *Ka-Zar*?" He said, "That sounds good." That was pretty much the end of it. [*Laughs*]

So now, you and Mark got your approval. When you sat down, did he come up with the plots himself or did you help with the storyline? How did all that work?

Mark always asks for input from me, which is another awesome thing. On *X-Men*, I really didn't have a say because there are so many X-books. It is so editorial driven. But Mark would say, "Andy, I want to plot this out with you. Come up with suggestions." Like in the second issue, there's a big fight scene between Ka-Zar and Gregor [a Spider-Man villain], and Mark is describing it like the ["Return of the Jedi"] scene with the Speeder Bikes. They go through the trees chasing and I was like, "I'm there. I can't add anything to that. Type it up and let's do it." So as far as what is down there now, it's mostly him. I mean, I come up with little innuendoes here and there, but it is mostly him.

How would you describe who Ka-Zar is?

He's me. [*Heavy laughter*]

I can see you running around the jungle...

[*More laughter*] It's hard to explain. He's totally confused and hard to dislike. He's in control, but he's not in control. He's a guy that tries real hard to do what he thinks is best. And I always wanted to live like that [in the wilderness], just as long as there's a Blockbuster nearby. [*Laughs*]

You were always a Ka-Zar fan, what was it about him that was so great?

I think it's got to be something where my dad harped me on the subject. I loved that stuff. When I was learning how to draw, I used to look at his Tarzan stuff, and it had a more earthy feel to it. It was more organic. When I bought the *Ka-Zar* series when it first came out in the '80s, I think that's what attracted me to that too. And I always liked Conan. Conan was like...wow. All I wanted to know was Conan, and Ka-Zar reminds me of Conan.

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What's in store for this new series? What can fans look out for?

We'll start in the Savage Land with a lot of action. We'll focus on the relationship between Ka-Zar, [his wife] Shanna and his [saber-toothed tiger] Zabu—it was funny, but when Mark wrote the first story, he compared Zabu to Captain America's shield…which I think is a great analogy. There will be an ongoing conflict between Ka-Zar and Shanna. Shanna hates civilization, while Ka-Zar likes it and kind of wants to go back there, so that is the conflicting thing between them during the whole storyline. And we'll have Ka-Zar's brother coming in.

So Ka-Zar's brother will be featured as a villain, and you mentioned Gregor earlier. What are their roles and will there be any other main villains?

Gregor is going to be an assassin that Ka-Zar's brother hired to go into the Savage Land and kill Ka-Zar. Basically, that's how the first issue is set up. Gregor is the guy that trained Kraven the Hunter [a Spider-Man villain], I think. He's an African-American guy with glasses, in a suit. We just wanted to make him an assassin type and tougher. He'll drink a potion and get all pumped up. I couldn't wait to draw that. I think he'll be a pretty good visual force. And for later, I know I want to put in the Rhino [another Spidey villain] eventually. I don't know where or when, but I want to draw Rhino really bad.

Now, when you came up with the visuals and were re-designing costumes, what was your take on Ka-Zar, the Savage Land and everything else?

Ka-Zar is a guy who likes civilization, but is still in the Savage Land. Originally, Mark wanted him in full blue jeans and it was my take to have him in cut-offs with like dinosaur skin coming over them. We decided to put him in Wolverine-type heavy work boots. We tried to—without totally going civilized and without totally going uncivilized—find a mixed medium that would look neat. Shanna, on the other hand, she's totally against civilizations, so she's in like a wild boar kind of black bikini thing. For Ka-Zar's hair, I wanted to make him look like a Wookiee savage with hair that could move. I wanted to give it movement when he was fighting, and make it stylized. I also tried to make the bodies better cut. When someone works out, they try to get to a certain physique. [*Uncanny X-Men* penciler] Joe Madureira does that great, he cuts them. Bob Harras calls it a '90s look.

You mentioned Joe Madureira. What was it like drawing *X-Men*?

When I first started on *X-Men*, I was nervous as hell! *X-Men* is THE most popular book in the industry! And I was *following* Jim Lee. The team has a lot of history with creators like John Byrne, Dave Cockrum, Chris Claremont and Marc Silvestri. All those big guys, and here's little ol' me. And this was my first regular book. It was pretty nerve racking.

Did you try to emulate Jim Lee's style or did you go your own way?

When I saw Jim's work coming out—when any artist sees another guy he likes a lot—something's going to come through. I bought all his *Punisher War Journals* because I thought this guy was phenomenal. I liked his style and what he was doing. Jim was a major league talent and I got influenced by him. I didn't do it so I could go and draw *X-Men*. I followed Jim's work from the beginning and it just started coming across in what I was doing. Commercially, that's what Marvel probably wanted to do. They didn't want to deviate from what was working. Why fix it if it's not broken? So here is Andy Kubert and his work is looking like Jim Lee's. So when Jim Lee went to form Image Comics, it made logical sense for [someone like me to do *X-Men*]. If I was Marvel, I'd have done the same thing.

So when Joe Madureira jumped on the X-Men bandwagon, did his radical Japanese manga style affect you in any way?

I thought there was a lot of energy to what he was doing, and he did influence me to a certain extent where I tried to get that same kind of energy in my work. He also does women in such a way that he makes them very feminine like Jean Grey. I have my strong points and my weak points. When I saw him doing his stuff, I was like, "Oh, okay." Maybe I was influenced by that, but as far as the cartoony style, it works great for Joe and God bless him, but that doesn't interest me in what I'm doing.

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Andy's Candies

Here's a list of Andy Kubert's favorite parts on his résumé, with his commentary following each.

Savage Sword of Conan #136 (1987)
"My first *Conan* issue. For a first issue, it's not bad. The raw energy was there, but it was just poorly drawn. Ugh. I had a long way to go."

Sgt. Rock #422 (1988)
"My dad [Joe Kubert] penciled, I inked and my brother [Adam] colored it. That was a lot of fun, but pretty harrowing. I had to ink my dad's pencils and only so many people ink his pencils. I don't think I did a good job. I took a lot of detail away from his pencils and didn't do it justice."

Adam Strange #1-#3 (1990)
"That was my first big mini-series. Now that I look at it, I see all these drawing mistakes like some weird anatomy stuff. But Adam [Kubert] colored it and saved my art a bit."

Batman/Predator #1-#3 (1991-92)
"A lot of fun. Dave Gibbons' script was just awesome to work from. Though deadlines were a killer, I still think it was one of the best projects I was involved in. It could've been better, but it was a good step in the right direction."

X-Men #26 (1993)
"It was the first time I got to draw Captain America, who I love drawing. That's when I knew I really liked doing work. It was the most fun I had drawing a comic book."

X-Men #33 (1994)
"This story just hit well with story, penciling, inking and color. I don't know why, but it just looked good and read well. It was the only self-contained X-Men story I had done. That may be my favorite issue that I've ever done."

X-Men #53-#56 (1996)
"That was the 'Onslaught' story. They seemed to click between story and art. They are perhaps the best I have drawn and maybe a bit better than *X-Men* #33. It was just great to be able to do all the other Marvel characters and I just loved working with Mark Waid on that."

Ka-Zar #1 (1997)
"I'm very happy with how it turned out, but #2 is already looking better. I can actually see myself getting better with each issue after that. I guess that's a good thing, huh?" [*Laughs*] ■*MS*

At left: A scene from *X-Men* #55

[There's a knock at the door and Andy sits up from his reclining position in his chair. "Andy, are you in there?" asks the voice on the other side of the door. Andy looks at me pensively, "Should I answer? It's my dad." Definitely, I respond. Joe Kubert peaks his head in the door and politely introduces himself. Andy explains he's doing an interview and Joe simply shakes my hand, graciously smiling. As he leaves, Andy gives a simple shrug and says, "That's my dad."]

So what was it like growing up in the Kubert family?

I always took what my dad did for granted and I know I'm stupid for that. When I was growing up, he was my dad. But now that I've finally gotten into comics and I figured out who he was…yeah…there is a big admiration and respect.

Did you ever brag to your friends about your dad?

Oh yeah. He drew Superman! I remember when my dad did an assembly when I was in grammar school. He was on the overhead projector and all the kids asked him to draw Superman, Batman, all these things. Somebody then asked him to draw Snoopy and he was like, "I can't do Snoopy." [*Laughs*]

So did your dad teach you how to draw?

Actually, I went to college at Rochester Institute of Technology for six months for packaging design. I had a blast, but I called my mom and dad and said, "Look, this isn't what I want to do." They said, "Why don't you come down to the [Kubert] School for a year and see what it's all about." When I went through the first year, I really got into it. I got into figure drawing, storytelling and started looking at other people's work. It just took off from there. But my dad always critiqued my stuff and he's usually right. [*Laughs*]

What are your plans for the future?

I'd have a blast with *Captain America*. I'd love to do *Spider-Man* somewhere down the road. Someday I'd like to do *Superman* or *Batman*, but right now I'm very happy where I am. I'll be on *Ka-Zar* till I get sick of him. [*Laughs*] And that might not be for another six years. [*Laughs*]

It's good to hear you're having fun with Ka-Zar.

Hopefully with Bob Harras and us two noodniks [himself and Waid], we'll come up with something that'll stick around. [*Laughs*] But I don't know. I'm just hoping that fans will like it enough to pick it up. I'm putting my heart and soul into it, and I hope that comes across to the fans. W

Matthew Senreich can do something Joe Kubert can't: he can draw Snoopy. Or something that kinda looks like him.

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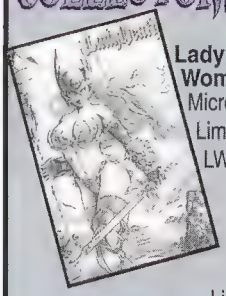

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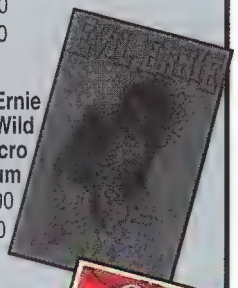

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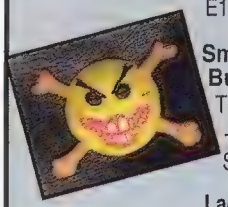

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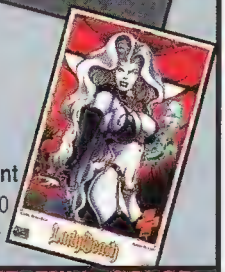

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Basic Training

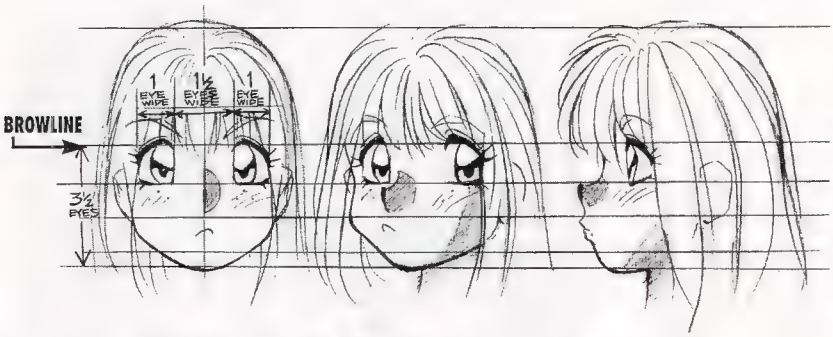
this month's host: Adam Warren

How to Draw in the 'Manga Style' (well, sort of)

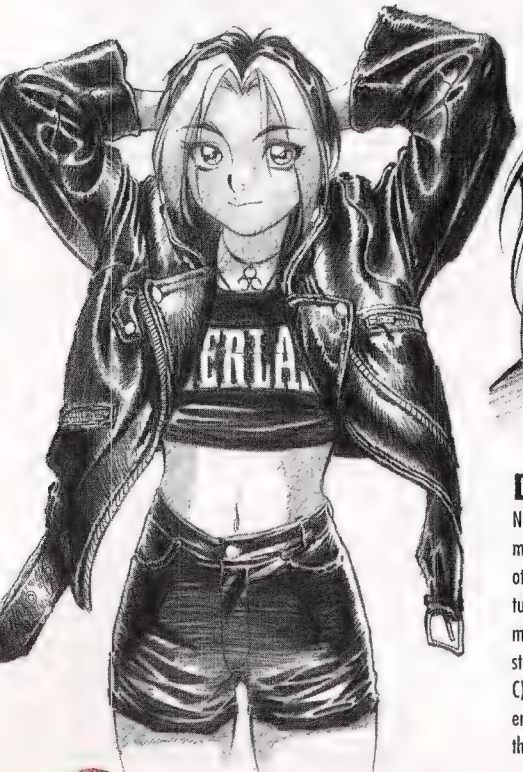
"Ha! There's nothing to this *manga* crap but saucer-eyed cutesy chicks and zillions of speed lines!" At least, that's what an underinformed but overopinionated Prominent Editor revealed to me 10 years ago. As a writer/artist heavily influenced by Japanese comics, I still disagree strongly with this widespread attitude, since "big eyes" and motion lines are only the most cosmetic and superficial of all the nifty techniques and fresh storytelling approaches that manga has to offer American comics.

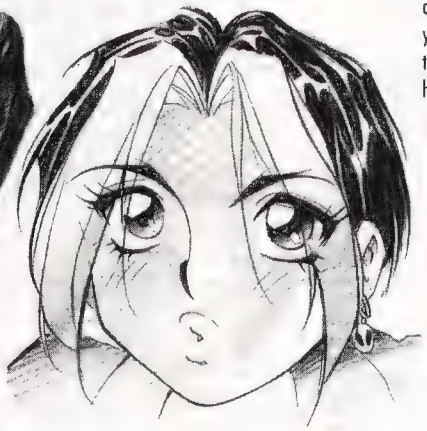
As UK manga stylist Wil Overton put it, "There is no one anime or manga style. There are common elements that run through many artists' works, but there are just as many different drawing styles as there are in western comic art—from the impossibly muscled cartoon characters in *Dragonball* to the more realistic proportions of *Akira*." That said, I will now reinforce this unfortunate stereotype by giving a few tips on drawing…you guessed it…"cutesy chicks and zillions of speed lines"! This stuff, at least, I can try to explain in five pages.

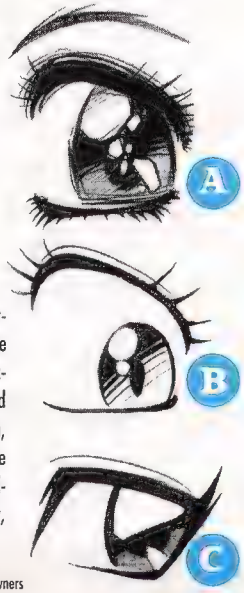
PART ONE: "SAUCER-EYED CUTESY CHICKS"



First off, you must realize that just like a real human head, the head of this typical "manga/anime babe" is constructed via a system of proportions. That is, real structure underlies her surreally distorted facial features. Start with a browline halfway down, dividing the face in two. Then decide how large the eyes will be in relation to the rest of the head. The critical proportions of her "facial mass," the area from browline to chin, are based upon the height and width of her eye: How many eyes "tall" is her face (3 1/2, here) and how many eyes "wide" is it (roughly 4 1/2)? You should note that this face is a moderate example of eye size. Using a larger- or smaller-sized eye as a base would result in different proportions than these. Slap some tracing paper over a face drawn by your favorite manga artist, and you can analyze its eye-based proportions along these lines. That's how, years ago, I first learned how other artists' facial drawing styles worked.







Dem Big Eyes!

Now, some manga artists draw highly detailed lashes and complex, enormously pupiled eyes full of multiple highlights (see example A, at right), while others prefer cleaner, simpler designs, featuring smaller iris-and-pupil structures in a large, white-filled eye (example B). Recently, some anime and manga character designers have taken an even more simplified approach, stressing bold lines, little detail and a higher degree of stylization (example C). For my version of Gen13's Freefall (at left and above), I've used a moderate level of detail and a smaller eye size than I would normally use for, say, the characters in my comic *Dirty Pair*.

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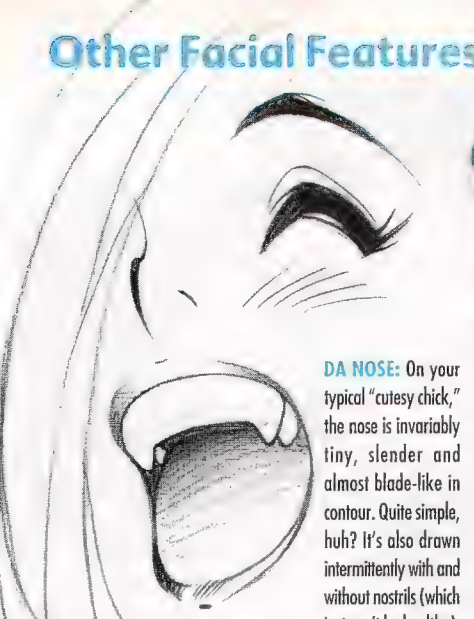
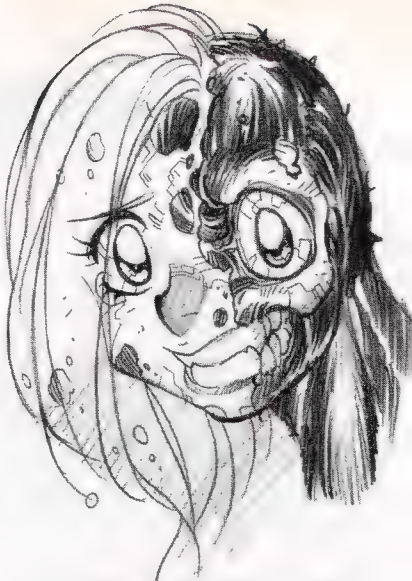
Other Facial Features



DA NOSE: On your typical "cutesy chick," the nose is invariably tiny, slender and almost blade-like in contour. Quite simple, huh? It's also drawn intermittently with and without nostrils (which just can't be healthy).

DA TEETH: A common "cutesy" motif is an exaggeration of the character's canines, a.k.a. the Lum (from Rumiko Takahashi's *Urusei Yatsura* series) "fang" look. I personally enjoy, and have frequently "borrowed," the method used by Yuzo Takada (*3X3 Eyes*), who often depicts his angry or yelling characters with exceedingly toothy maws worthy of a great white.

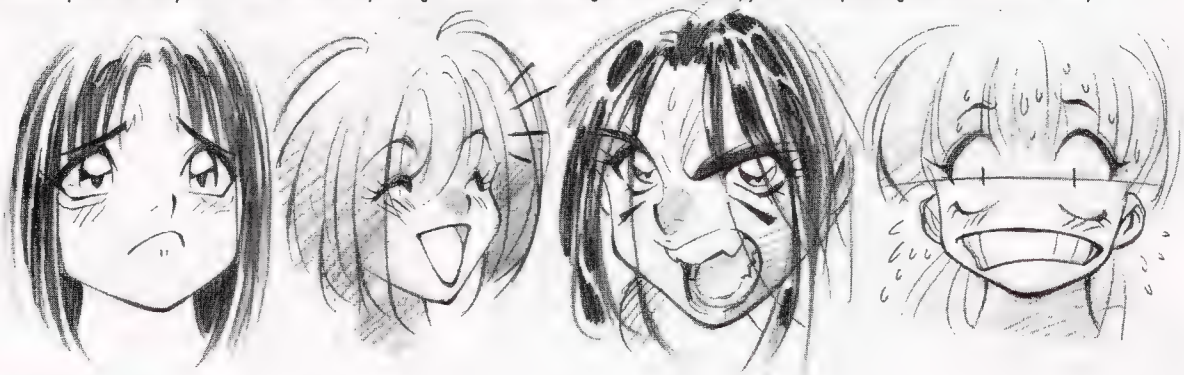
DA MOUTH: Some manga artists, such as Yukito Kishiro (*Battle Angel Alita*) and Kenji Tsuruta (*Spirit of Wonder*), actually indicate lips on their heroines' mouths, while most others don't. Those few that do will use anything from thin to full lips, and even change them from panel to panel. I've actually received several complaints from WAY-too-involved fans demanding of me, "Why do you put lips on manga characters? Why?"



Hey, look! It's Gabrielle (above), the tormented cyborg from my *Titans: Scissors, Paper, Stone* project for DC (Which ships in March, by the way!), after an exposure to alien stomach acid! Here, she serves as a display of just how bizarre the skeletal structure under a "cutesy chick" face would have to be (the size of the eye socket, how low the cheekbones are, etc.)...and also as a blatant plug for my current project! How about that!

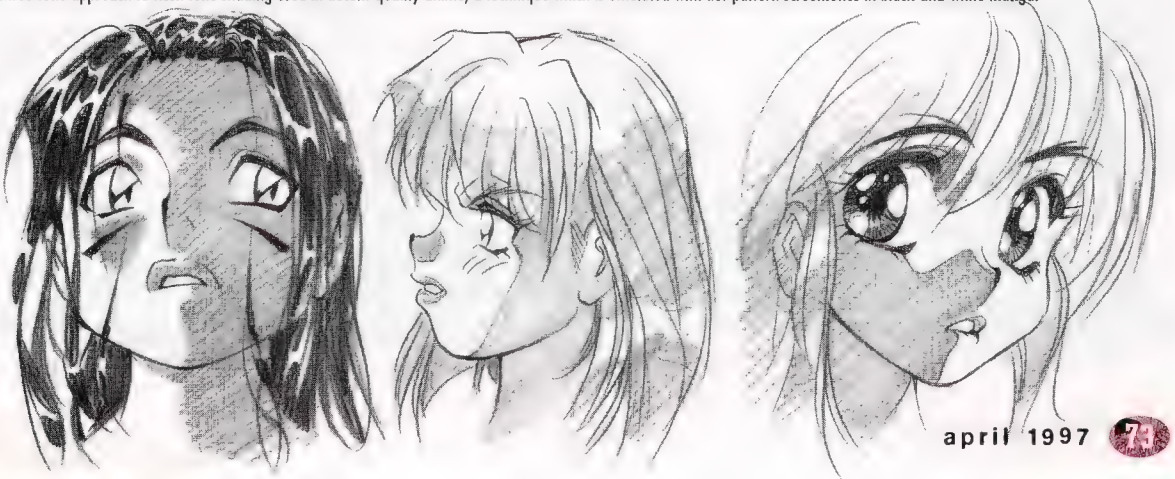
Expressions

Yes, it's true. Many manga artists are notoriously fond of drawing radically comical and distorted facial expressions on their characters (such as the examples below). But alas, young manga fans, the basic elements of facial expression (positioning of eyebrows, eyelids, mouths and so on) are still critical to study. The truth is, I had to learn the mechanics involved in different expressions the way most "realistic" artists do: by looking in the mirror and making faces. In other words, you can't escape having to draw from real life. Sorry.



Shading

Here, I'm using shading as a means of defining the *extremely* simple contours of the "anime/manga" face. Some colorists, who are used to detailed flesh tone rendering on more "realistic" faces, often try to render complex real-life facial structures (nasal bridges, eye sockets, cheekbones) on a manga-style face...with disastrous results. That's the main reason most manga are in black and white. Remember, with a "cutesy chick" face, you're dealing with hyperstylized topology that has *zero* relation to reality. I prefer to stick with the simple two- or three-tone approach to flesh tone shading used in decent-quality anime, a technique which is emulated with dot-pattern screentones in black-and-white manga.



PART TWO: "...AND ZILLIONS OF SPEED LINES!"

Speed lines, flash lines, subjective motion lines…whatever you call 'em, they're now a mainstay of American as well as Japanese comics. Well, here are a few "stupid speed line tricks" cribbed from manga that a few readers might not have seen before, in a penciled demonstration sequence starring Gen13's own Freefall and Grunge!

Obvious Point #1

As in perspective drawing, speed lines radiate from a single vanishing point (here, the wee little "X" next to the bowling ball), and are *not* just thrown into a panel willy-nilly (a sadly common American trait).

Some manga artists' speed lines are distinctly tapered, dwindling from a thick base to a thin, pointed end. These lines are best inked either with multiple passes of a technical pen or, for the more adventurous, a flexible crowquill-style pentip. Needless to say, kids, always use a raised or inking edge on your triangle or french curve (available at your local art store) when doing this, or ink will go *everywhere*…

Other manga artists, as well as most American artists, use nontapering lines of uniform thickness (as seen in this panel's background), which are easily inked with, say, a .35mm technical pen. Overuse of this type of line, however, can become visually dull and repetitive real fast.

Two things to keep in mind when comparing different artists' speed line methods: the lines' grouping (speed lines are generally clustered in groups of one to eight) and their spacing (that is, how much open space separates each group of lines). Some artists use large groups of lines with little spacing between them, while others take the opposite approach. I've used all the approaches in the next couple of pages.

Obvious Point #2

When using speed lines in action sequences, try to preserve the left-to-right flow of movement in the panel. Ideally, the "cause" of an action (here, a bowling ball) should be on the left, while the "effect" of it (Grunge's head snapping back) should be on the right. Of course, untranslated and therefore unreversed manga would reverse this order, since true Japanese manga are read from right to left.

A neat trick common to action-oriented manga is "motion blurring," in which the outline of part of a figure or object (here, part of Freefall's arm) is diffused or broken up along its line of motion, adding to the sense of movement.

Another useful trick is to draw speed lines with a french curve, rather than the usual straightedged ruler or triangle. Giving the "field of motion" a distinct arc adds a little more zip to the same ol' speed lines (as it does here, in the area around Grunge's head).

Speaking of zip, depicting the shadows of moving objects (here, the falling Grunge) with bold speed lines tapering out of solid black can add a little of said quality to an otherwise boring panel.

No exciting new techniques in this panel, I'm afraid. Just more speed lines. Sorry.

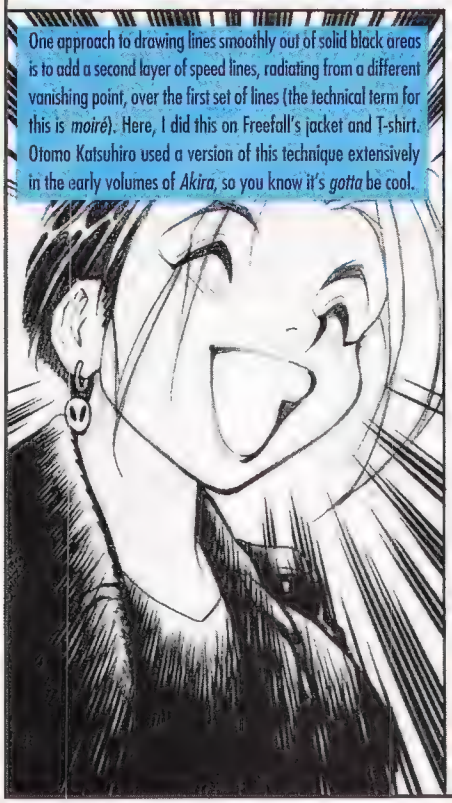
Another approach is to incorporate areas of solid black into your speed line groups, which adds more bold values to the page…but beware—this can muddy up a panel with too many competing areas of black, so watch out!

If you're going to "motion blur" part of a figure (here, Freefall's left leg), make sure that its blurring outline is in alignment and heading in the same direction as the speed lines around it, okay? Otherwise, things could get confusing.

Now *this* technique, featuring bold, tapering lines arranged singly (or in very small groups) with wide spacing between them, is typically used for indicating dramatic emphasis rather than motion.

In case you hadn't noticed, I'm enamored of the manga technique of breaking up dark areas (like on Freefall's jacket, here) into tapering speed lines. The main difficulty here is inking the damn things, which would again require multiple passes with a technical pen or a crowquill pentip.

Incidentally, I don't normally fill in the black areas of my penciled pages quite so boldly; I just did it here for clarity. This much lead on the page can cause graphite smearing, which in turn can lead to difficulty in inking and erasing. Aieee!



One approach to drawing lines smoothly out of solid black areas is to add a second layer of speed lines, radiating from a different vanishing point, over the first set of lines (the technical term for this is *moiré*). Here, I did this on Freefall's jacket and T-shirt. Otomo Katsuhiro used a version of this technique extensively in the early volumes of *Akira*, so you know it's *gotta* be cool.

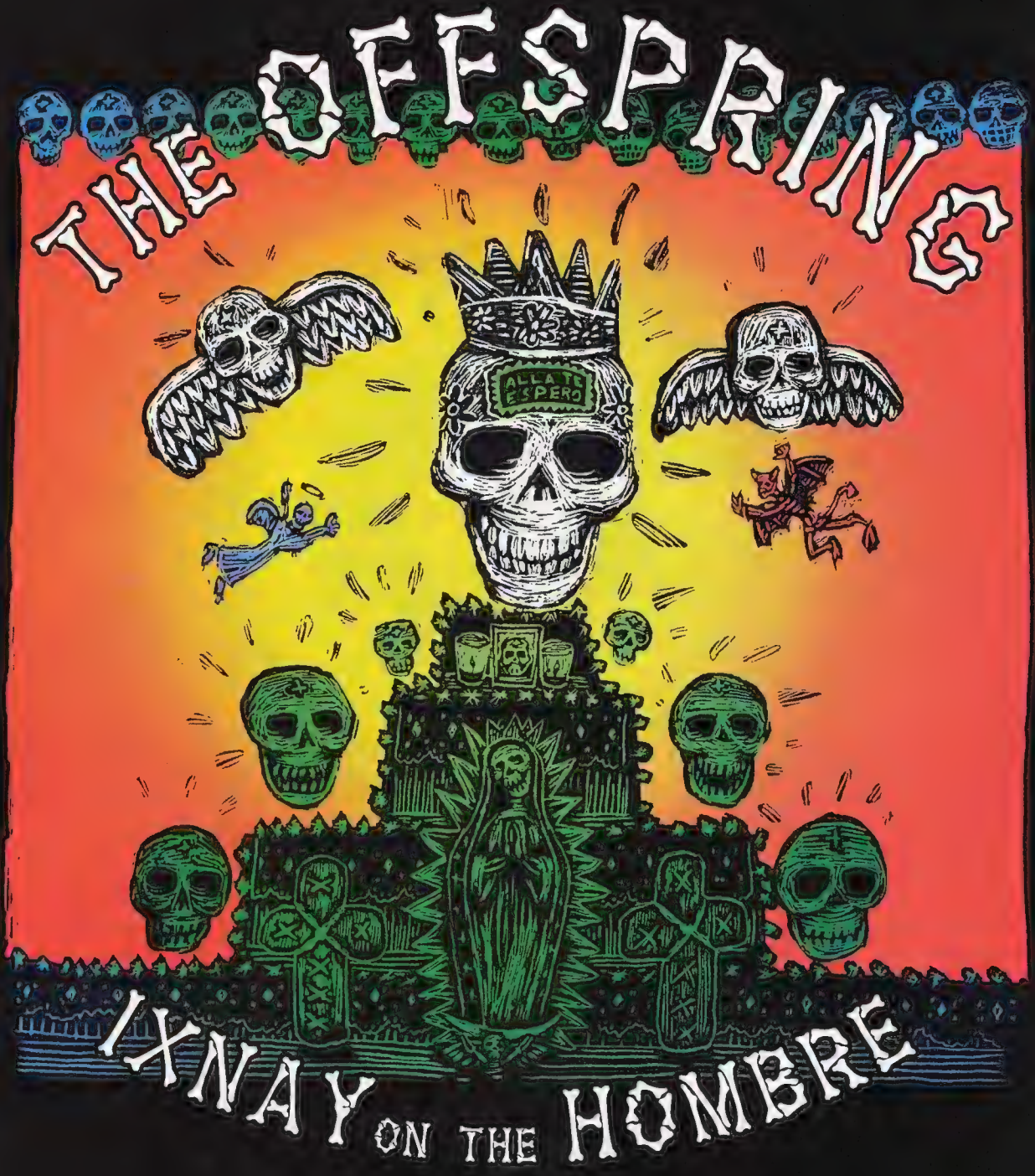
Now, all you Gen13 fans, I *am* aware that Freefall doesn't know any martial arts techniques. She probably doesn't bowl, either.

This was only a test of the Emergency Speed Line Demonstration System. You may now return to your regular Gen13 continuity.

Well! After this laughably superficial survey of "cutesy chicks and speed lines," now what? I haven't touched on any serious issues concerning Japanese comics, such as storytelling devices, mood evocation and action flow. Maybe some other time, huh? Anyway, I personally got started in this stylistic groove by copying "saucer eyes" and speed lines myself, but eventually perceived that there was more to manga than the "big-eyed" surface. Maybe you will too.

Hastily assembled reading list: Though I don't agree with all his points, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* has some valuable commentary on manga, particularly chapter three's examination of Osamu Tezuka's use of transitions. Frederik Schodt's classic *Manga! Manga!* is required reading for anyone interested in Japanese comics, while his new book *Dreamland Japan* provides an excellent look at the genuine diversity of manga as a creative medium. Take that, Mr. Prominent Editor. W

Adam Warren served his time in the "manga-style" trenches writing and drawing five Dirty Pair *(and one* Bubblegum Crisis*) mini-series. His upcoming work as a "wartist" includes March's* Titans: Scissors, Paper, Stone *Elseworlds one-shot for DC, an upcoming three-issue arc on* Gen13 Bootleg *(surprise, surprise) for WildStorm, and yet another* Dirty Pair *mini-series due sometime later this year.*



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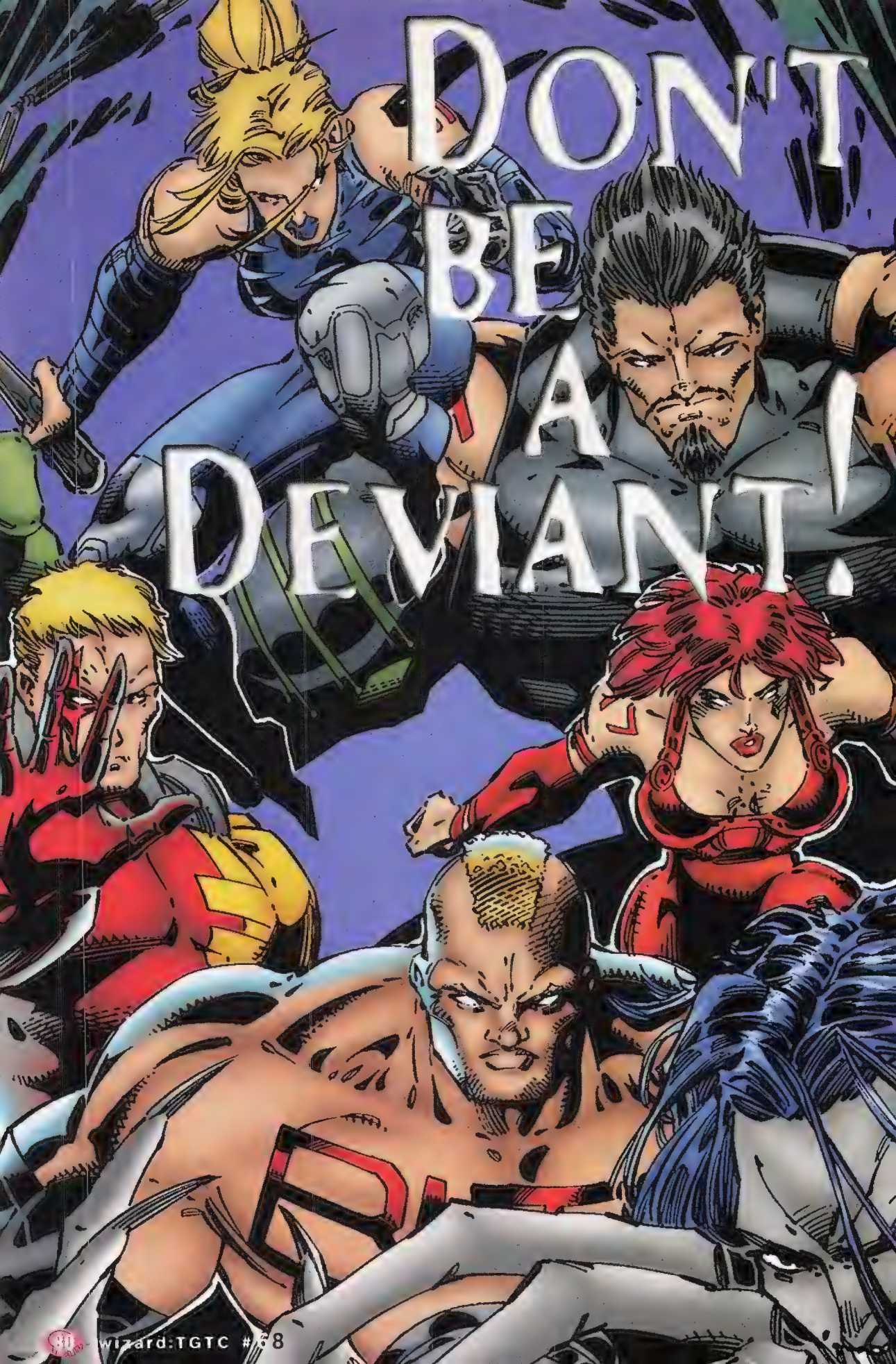
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The Superman Wall Relief Sculpture features a raised image of the classic cover of *Action Comics* #1, which featured Supes' very first appearance. Sculpted by William Pacquet (Swamp Thing) and made of cold-cast porcelain, each piece is hand-painted in a bronze-like finish. You'll find it in May with a price tag of $99.

SMOKIN'!

Following up his awesome Flukeman statue from Dark Horse Comics' X-Files Paranormal Collection, sculptor extraordinaire Randy Bowen continues his 1/8-scale offerings with the Smoking Alien from the "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space' " episode of the mega-popular TV series "The X-Files." This stunning, hand-painted figurine features a distraught alien dragging on a cigarette following his own alien abduction! Shipped in a full-color collector's box, the fully painted Smoking Alien cold-cast statue retails for just $125 at specialty stores everywhere.

MORE BONE FOR YOUR BUCK

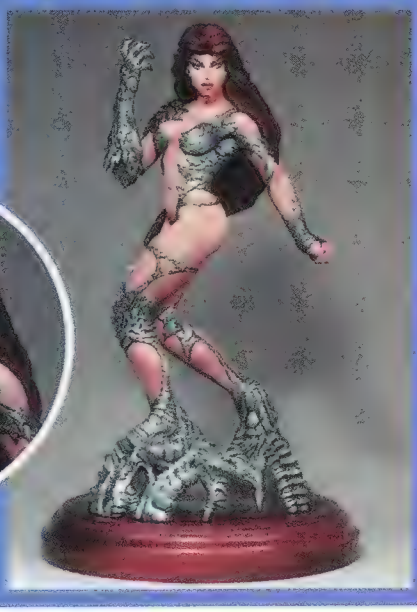
Finally, the new set of Bone magnets is coming in March! Like the previous two sets, Bone Magnet Set #3 features your favorite Bone characters in magnet form for only $6.95. Look for Gran'ma Ben, Fone Bone in love, and a stupid, stupid rat creature. But wait, there's more! At no extra cost, this set features a magnet of everybody's favorite bug, Ted! (Reproduced larger than life, otherwise you'd have a magnet the size of a booger.) Keep a lookout for them, 'cause these babies are gonna go quick!

Gran'ma Ben Magnet

Product of the Month

WITCHY WOMAN

Tom Cow Comics' gorgeous femme fatale Witchblade gets the end this month for the coolest comic collectible. From Moore Creations comes this life-like sculpture of Sara Pezzini, wielding the amazing power of the Witchblade! Featured in cold-cast porcelain by Clayburn Moore himself, the Witch Made-statue captures the [illegible] of creators Marc Silvestri and Michael Turner in spectacular detail. Standing 13 inches tall with a hard-wood base, as well as a limited edition run of only 4,000 pieces, this one is destined to fly off specialty store shelves. Look for her to stay for just $175.



DV8 MUG SHOTS

Those DV8 kids from WildStorm are the hottest things going since…well, since those Gen[13] kids. And now you can stare at their hip faces every day over coffee with the DV8 Collector's Mugs. You can buy each mug separately or get the five-mug set for only $44.95. (Yowza, that's a lotta java!) These 11-ounce white mugs feature popular DV8 characters Powerhaus, Frostbite, Evo, Sublime and Copycat. Keep an eye out for them in March at specialty comic stores everywhere.

DV8 Mugs

MORE MARVEL METAL MEDALS

The Highland Mint has done it again by immortalizing Marvel superheroes in precious metal. The New Marvel Medallions feature bronze and silver replicas of everyone's favorite wall-crawler, Spider-Man! The artwork on the medallions is from top-notch Marvel comic artist Steve Skroce. On one side, Spidey aims his web-shooters while his spider-sense is a-tingling; on the flip side, there's a history of the character and the serial number of your medallion. The bronze medallions are limited to 25,000 pieces and go for $9.95 each, while the silver ones are limited to only 5,000 mintings and cost $19.95 each. You can only find them through authorized Mint-Card dealers. Just call 1-800-544-6135 for the dealer nearest you.

Spider-Man Bronze Medallion

STICKY MARVEL STUFF

Are you getting tired of those same ol' trading cards? (After all, they don't really *do* anything!) Then try new Marvel Pro Magnets and Pro Stamps! The 1996-97 Marvel Pro Magnets come with five magnets per pack featuring one of 50 Marvel superheroes and villains. So what makes these better than cards? Well, for one thing, they'll stick to your fridge. You can collect the Fantastic Four, Hulk, Venom, Spider-Man, She-Hulk, the X-Men and many more. And if you don't have a fridge, there's always the 1996-97 Marvel Pro Stamps. These are 24 collectible Marvel stamps which come in random packs of six self-adhesive stickers (meaning you don't have to get sick licking 'em). Like the

Monopoly: Star Wars Collector's Edition

Pro Magnets, the Pro Stamps feature all of your favorite superheroes and villains—and unlike the magnets, they'll stick to your dog. Look for the Marvel Pro Stamps and Magnets in comic book stores everywhere in March.

DO NOT PASS GO, DO NOT COLLECT 200 CREDITS

A long time ago in a galaxy real close, the great board game *Monopoly* was created by those masters at Parker Brothers. Now experience it at a new level with *Monopoly: Star Wars Collector's Edition*! Parker Bros and Lucasfilm have gone out of their way to really make this game cooler than its poppa. First off, the dog and thimble game pieces have been replaced with cool pewter figurines of Luke, Leia, Chewbacca, Han Solo, R2-D2, Darth Vader, a Stormtrooper and Boba Fett! The game's banker gets to deal New Galaxy money (in credits!) and five brass $1,000 Imperial coins instead of fake U.S. currency. Those "Community Chest" and "Chance" cards are replaced with Rebel and Imperial cards (Check out who wins the beauty contest!). The board itself has all-new properties—including Endor, Hoth and Dagobah—except for the four corners: GO, JUST VISITING, FREE PARKING and GO TO JAIL. (How the heck do you send Darth Vader to jail?!?). But the coolest part o' the game is that the houses and hotels are replaced with game pieces of X-Wing Fighters and Millennium Falcons for Rebel characters, and TIE Fighters and Death Stars for Imperials! You can find *Monopoly: Star Wars Collector's Edition* at toy and game stores everywhere for approximately $25 or 10,000 credits. ("10,000 credits! We can

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out some nifty-sweet comic-related merchandise like Cap'n America Crunch cereal, Tatooine Tusken Pops (for those hot, sultry days!) and Killer Croc scaly mayonnaise (It's crunchy-good!)? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our disco-funky "Junk Drawer" column. Of course, we'd also like sculptures, posters, T-shirts, novels, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and samples products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

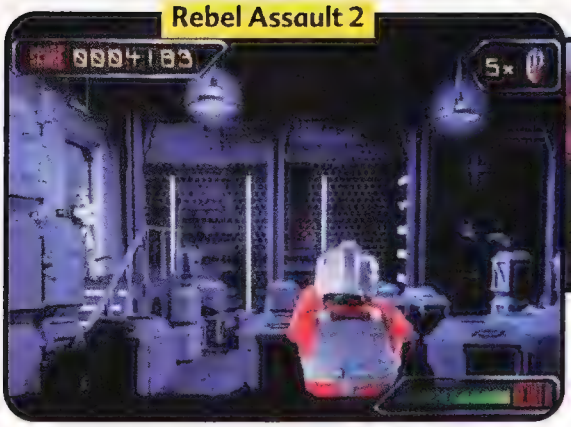
1997 ROCKS WITH STAR WARS AND THE GXTV

While the "Star Wars" Trilogy's Special Edition releases entice a whole new generation of Jedi fans to the big screen, gamers are enjoying several new releases to whet their appetites for all things Force-related. This month, we've got reviews for both *Dark Forces* and *Rebel Assault 2*, the latest video game releases to capitalize on George Lucas' magnum opus. You'll also find a review of the latest video game from the Bat-franchising bonanza, *Batman Forever: The Arcade Game*. And for fans like us who'll be reminiscing over the '70s while watching Luke blow the Death Star to smithereens, Samsung unleashes the perfect machine to dust off those fondly remembered (and sadly, horribly obsolete) systems from yesteryear. Interested? Read on…

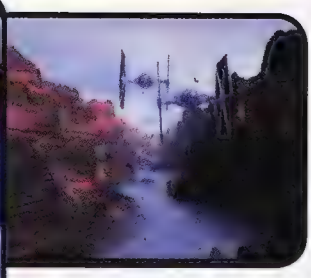
TITLE: *Dark Forces*
MANUFACTURER: LucasArts
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Dark Forces is the PlayStation version of the classic PC game, but ironically, the computer that *Dark Forces* was originally programmed for has been outpaced by today's home-vid systems. This new version is superior in all phases: playability, processing speed and graphics. *Dark Forces* is a first-person, *DOOM*-type, action/adventure executed in richly detailed 3-D environments. This untold "Star Wars" story takes place in actual continuity with the films. It seems that the Rebel Alliance has entrusted rebel sympathizer Kyle Katarn with a vital mission. Katarn must procure the very plans that the Rebels used to find the fatal flaw in the Empire's Death Star. You assume the role of Katarn, navigating through more than a dozen complex and realistic multi-level worlds. There are a few puzzles along the way, but *Dark Forces* is essentially an orgy of laser blasts and

Dark Forces



Rebel Assault 2



Stormtrooper slaughter. The boss is a cyborg Empire creation, the Dark Trooper—and he's a supreme bad-ass. Watch out for him. Bottom line: If you have this for your PC, this version isn't vital at all. But if this PlayStation version is your first exposure to *Dark Forces*, it's a serious must-have.

TITLE: *Rebel Assault 2*
MANUFACTURER: LucasArts
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Rebel Assault 2, unlike *Dark Forces*, isn't a no-brainer purchase. We found the full-motion video (FMV) to be poorly acted. As well, the infuriatingly long loading time may make you want to chuck it and insert another game. A mixture of genres, *Rebel Assault 2* is an arcade-style game set in the Star Wars Universe, featuring 3-D graphics and over 10 minutes of all-new "Star Wars" footage. Apparently, this is a huge improvement over the original PC version. LucasArts has newly rendered several FMV sequences and enhanced the color and sound. The problem with this game is that it was cool when it was programmed two years ago, but both *Rebel Assault 2* and FMV have been rendered obsolete since then. There are enough intricate "Star Wars" details and challenges to keep most gamers suitably enthralled, but once you've completed the many missions, most will never play it again. By no means is *Rebel Assault 2* a bad game, it's just not a great one. And with so many great games to choose from, *Rebel Assault 2* is just another victim of mediocrity.

TITLE: *Batman Forever: The Arcade Game*
MANUFACTURER: Acclaim
PLATFORMS: Sega Saturn and PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $59.99, available now

Batman Forever: The Arcade Game

Even impressive graphics and tons of weapons pick-ups can't disguise the fact that *Batman Forever* is yet another side-scrolling punch-and-kick fest. Pasting in the characters and plotline of the movie, *Batman Forever* follows the same pattern of every Acclaim licensed video game. To Acclaim's credit, this is the best side-scroller yet, with furious non-stop action and difficult levels which culminate in wonderfully rendered bosses. And it's not as if we were disappointed when we sat down and played *Batman Forever*—we expected a solid action/adventure that broke no new ground, and that's exactly what we got. The two-player option is fairly good, but one rental ought to suffice. Because of the rote nature of this game, it's probably more ideal for younger or novice gamers.

VIDEO GAME Product of the Month

TITLE: GXTV
MANUFACTURER: Samsung
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $299.99, available now

The GXTV is a personal video game television that is so incredible and convenient, we can't fathom why nobody has produced one until now. The biggest problem we faced as youthful gamers in the late '70s and early '80s (we're talking Atari 2600!), was that many of us only had one color TV per household, which meant waiting until it was freed up from other viewers in order to play *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*.

Not only is the GXTV ideal for gaming, the 13-inch television is 181-channel cable ready. Basically, a high-definition computer monitor, the GXTV is loaded with graphic and stereo surround-sound features. Designed with today's cutting-edge games in mind, the GXTV has graphic-enhancement circuitry and Dolby noise reduction built in. Preset sound settings give each type of video game a distinct flavor. After hooking up a Nintendo 64 for the initial test run, we discovered an RF input and connected an ancient Intellivision system to the GXTV. We then played *Utopia* and *Defender* well into the wee hours of the morn, until finally collapsing in subversive glee.

Yesterday's games never looked so good. Thank God someone at Samsung had backward compatibility in mind and included the RF input. Now, if we could only find an original *Pong* game unit…

THE TOY CHEST

TRANSLUCENT BEN KENOBI EXCLUSIVE!

Long rumored as an upcoming Kenner exclusive Star Wars figure release, the **Translucent Obi-Wan Kenobi** is finally a reality! With Pepsico Inc. enjoying a lion's share of Star Wars 20th Anniversary merchandising through its Taco Bell and Pizza Hut franchises, the soda pop company has imparted a portion of the fun to the Lays potato chip company. The Translucent Obi-Wan is a retooled Power of the Force offering done in...you guessed it...translucent blue-green plastic to resemble the "ghostly" Ben Kenobi from "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi." In order to acquire the figure, fans need only send in two proofs-of-purchase from either Lays' regular potato chips or Lays' Pizza Hut-flavored potato chips, in addition to $1.99. Onion dip is extra.

FEATURED CREATURES

Also on tap from Kenner are two brand-new Star Wars creature two-packs: **Jabba the Hutt with Han Solo** and **Dewback with Sandtrooper**. Jabba sports a newly sculpted version of the intergalactic crimelord, not seen since his first Kenner go-'round back in 1983. The same goes for the Dewback, which reflects current Special Edition redesigns

Kenner and Lays' exclusive Translucent Ben Kenobi

Dewback with Sandtrooper

Jabba the Hutt with Han Solo

BY **SCOTT BEATTY**

of the Imperial Stormtroopers' mode of Tatooine transportation. (Note the more slender legs and snarling mouth.) And like other recent Kenner action figure two-packs, both Han and the Sandtrooper are slightly modified from the originals. Each creature two-pack has an approximate retail of $12.99 and should be hitting toy shelves in June.

STAR WARS WEBSITE

On January 21st, Hasbro, Inc. launched the ultimate Star Wars webite at **http://www.starwars.hasbro.com** to provide kids and collectors with the latest and most definitive information about Kenner, Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers Star Wars products, including the ultra-popular action figure line.

Using the latest Shockwave videos, browsers to the site can the development stage of Kenner's action figures, from concept to completion. As well, the original 1977-1985 Kenner action figure line is spotlighted for collectors to compare and contrast with the current line. Using Quicktime VR, many of the characters can be rotated 360 degrees for full viewing. If that's not enough to pique fans interest, the site also sports movie clips featuring footage of the characters that inspired the action figures. And even more interesting to the collector is the official website action figure, **B'Omarr Monk** from "Return of the Jedi" (remember that brain-in-a-goldfish-bowl-on-spidery-legs from Jabba's palace?). Viewed in the Hasbro Model Shop, this figure will be available for purchase directly from the Internet in August. For more info, just surf to the site! And for more info on other Hasbro products, check out the company's website **http://www.hasbrotoys.com**.

BIG'UNS

Check 'em out...Series 3 in the popular **Star Wars Collector's Edition** 12-inch action figure line from Hasbro New Ventures: **Luke Skywalker in X-Wing Pilot Uniform**, **Boba Fett**, **Stormtrooper** and **Princess Leia**! Look for 'em now.

Boba Fett

Stormtrooper

Princess Leia

Luke Skywalker in X-Wing Pilot Uniform

Spider-Man: Web Splashers (from left): Deep Sea Dr. Octopus, Deep Sea Venom, Shark Trap Spider-Man (sprawled), Sea Hunter Spider-Man and Deep Sea Diver Spider-Man

AQUA-SPIDEY!

Toy Biz's Spider-Man line heads for the surf this spring in **Spider-Man: Web Splashers**, an all-new assortment taking Spidey from the Big Apple and slappin' scuba gear on him and his worst foes! Comprising the lineup are **Deep Sea Diver Spider-Man**, **Deep Sea Dr. Octopus**, **Shark Trap Spider-Man**, **Deep Sea Venom** and **Sea Hunter Spider-Man**. In addition to various underwater gear, each figure comes with its own inflatable accessory. This line has bathtub fun written all over it. (Insert own joke here.) Look for figures at retail toy stores for just $5.99 apiece.

X-Men: Robot Fighters' Storm will also come in a short 'doo variant

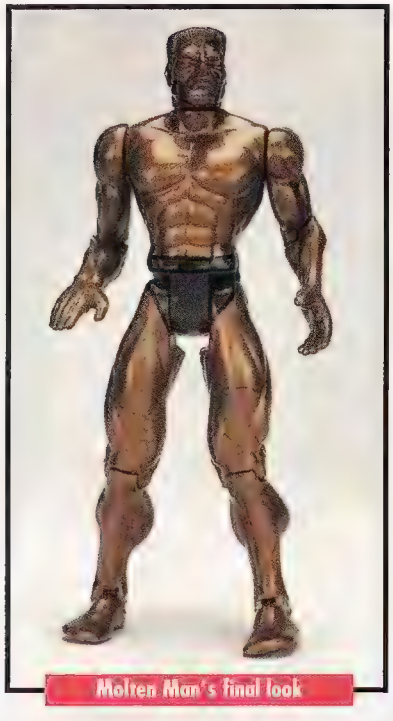
MARVEL MAKEOVERS

In Toy Biz's affordable **10-inch Marvel Universe** category (just $6.99 each!), look for the brand-new **She-Hulk** and **Super-Poseable Spider-Man** (in the pre-Venom black costume). Shulkie should look a little familiar, if you can imagine actress Lucy Lawless covered in green paint (hubba hubba!). That's 'cause the new figure is actually a re-decoed 10-inch Xena figure from Toy Biz's Hercules line. How's that for recycling?

And if the new **Storm** figure from the **X-Men: Robot Fighters** line looks a li'l strange (we first showed her back in *Wizard* #65), it's merely because the weather-manipulating Ororo got a new 'doo for the last 100,000 figures in the series.

MOLTEN MAN SELLS OUT!

Some readers of last fall's ***ToyFare Special*** who ordered the exclusive **Toy Biz Molten Man** action figure have written to us inquiring why their order forms and checks were mailed back with "Return to Sender" stamped on their envelopes. First the good news: Molten Man, which was limited to a production run of just 7,500 pieces, sold out in a little over a month. The bad news? Orders *vastly* exceeded our expectations, which meant that we had to close the post office address for the offer as soon as we'd reached our limit. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused collectors. We know how it feels when you can't get the action figures you want. The upside is that in our upcoming ***ToyFare Spring Special*** we'll offer an exclusive **Toy Biz Kitty Pryde** figure—and this time, we've increased production to match expected demand.


Molten Man's final look

BRAND-NEW MCFARLANE CLUB EXCLUSIVE

After its successful 1996 exclusive Red Angela offering, the McFarlane Toys Collectors' Club is offering another exclusive through its membership catalog. Now available is the McFarlane Toys Collectors' Club exclusive **Spawn Series 3 Repaint Set**, which includes all-new paint decoes for **Spawn II**, **Redeemer**, **The Curse**, **Violator II**, **Ninja Spawn**, **Vertebreaker** and **Cosmic Angela**. The entire set, available *only* through the Club's catalog, costs just $75.00, less 10% for Gold Club Members.

Skybolt Toyz's Hellina action-figure prototype

SHOTGUN MARY DEBUTS

Antarctic Press follows up its first toy offering, Warrior Nun Areala, with two new action figures for release early this summer. Exclusive to the direct market, **Shotgun Mary** makes her action figure debut alongside the first **Holy White Warrior Nun Areala**. Shipped in cases of six figures, a **Shotgun Mary Variant** figure will accompany an assortment of three standard Shotgun Mary figures and two Holy White Warrior Nun Areala figures. The variant figure will ship on a completely different blister card and will most likely be outfitted in black leather and include a different weapons assortment and different colored glasses. Each new Antarctic figure has a suggested retail of $9.95, and should hit comic and specialty store toy shelves in June.

Antarctic Press Shotgun Mary action figure

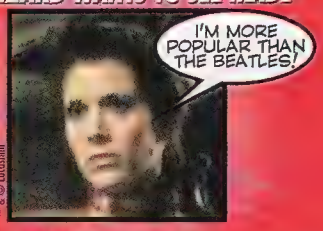
MORE GOOD NEWS FOR BAD GIRLS

Lightning Entertainment Inc., publisher of Lightning Comics' *Hellina*, has announced the formation of **Skybolt Toyz**, a new toy division that launches with the first **Hellina** action figure. Equipped with a detachable "battle-torn" cape, telekinetic dagger and "nether-dimensional" whip, the six-inch tall figure comes carded and is available in specialty comic book stores only for the suggested retail price of $10.95. Scheduled to ship in time for the major summer comic book conventions of 1997, Skybolt's first action figure will also be offered in a limited-edition (5,000 units) **Platinum Hellina** format, sold separately for a suggested retail of $14.95. For more info on Hellina and future Skybolt Toyz offerings, just check out the company's website at **http://www.menubytes.com.skybolt**.

Scott Beatty volunteers to cover "Xena"star Lucy Lawless in paint...any paint at all. Yup...he's a painter, he is.

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE



TM & © Lucasfilm

1) Slave Girl Leia (Star Wars)
Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Leia in a bikini. Oh yeah, and a Jabba choker chain too. Make it happen, Kenner!

2) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
If you liked *Marvel vs. DC* and *All Access*, we know you'd love action figures based on funky heroes like Super-Soldier, Dark Claw, Spider-Boy and Dr. Strangefate... or cool villains like the Green Skull or the Hyena.

3) Joseph (X-Men)
The current, kinder and gentler Magneto who's puttin' the moves on Rogue lately, would be served up in his current hybrid Magneto costume and arrive with a big ol' snap-together, light-up, magnetic "force field" globe in which you can place Joey.

4) Witchblade (Top Cow)
Top Cow's femme fatale extraordinaire has the biggest... uh... blade this side of Excalibur. Serve her up with breakaway street clothes and a nifty snap-on Witchblade gauntlet and blade, and she'll hit the town (and the bad guys) in style.

5) Gen13 (WildStorm)
WildStorm's titanic teens, as follows: Fairchild w/ breakaway student clothes, Grunge w/ interchangeable "absorbed" arms, Freefall w/ punker outfit change, Rainmaker w/ light-up eyes & snap-on energy bolts, and Burnout w/ light-up hands & light-up, snap-on flame blasts.

6) The Darkness (Top Cow)
Top Cow's resident supernatural hitman Jackie Estacado would come with a loaded piece (as Jackie), snap-on Darkness armor and twisted little Darkling trolls.

7) X-Man (X-Men)
The genetic offspring of Cyclops and Jean Grey (read: alternate Cable) would come with nifty-sweet snap-on TK blasts.

8) Blink (X-Men)
She's more popular than Nintendo 64... and she's dead! Marvel's mutant sweetheart from "Age of Apocalypse" gets so many letters, we'd better start seeing her action figure with static-cling "teleport" portals & removable energy javelins, or else!

9) Kingdom Come (DC Heroes)
DC's smash hit from 1996 would spawn action figures of Superman, Green Lantern, Magog, Batman and allo rest of those whacked-out future heroes 'n' villains.

10) Young Khan (Star Trek)
The villain who first menaced the *U.S.S. Enterprise* in the "Classic Trek" episode "Space Seed," would come carded with a break-apart cryogenic tube and a nifty shiv to carve up that pansy-ass Kirk.

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

Top 10 Wish List
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

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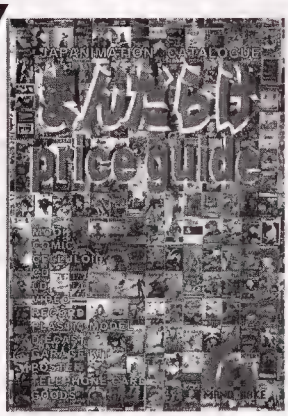

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price guide

price:1.500-yen page:208p size:B5 only1.000copies

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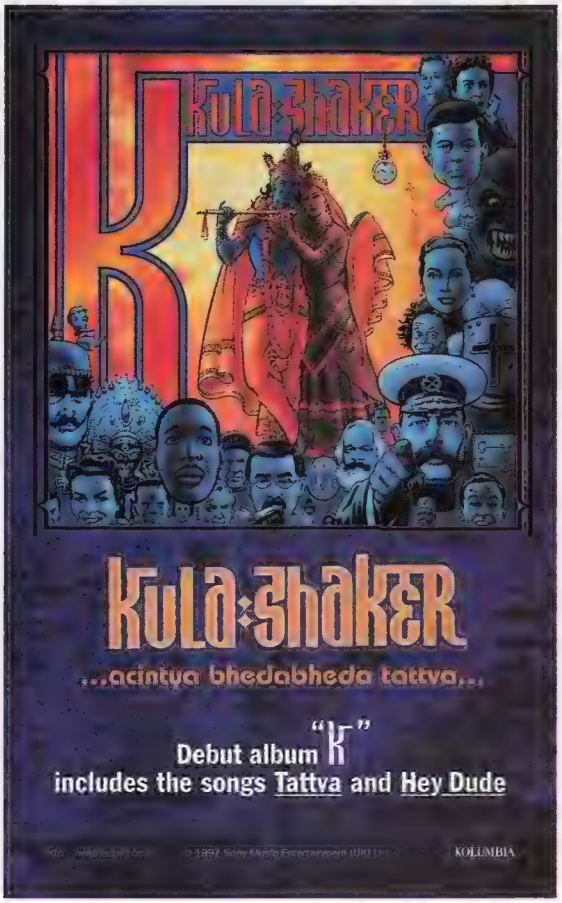

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Graphitti Designs Presents:

A "Mound of Merchandise" Contest

CONTEST

As you can see here, the fine folks at Graphitti Designs make some of the best comic merchandise you're ever going to find! But as much as they make, there's still got to be something left that they haven't done. What is it? You tell us!

We want you to draw and/or describe your idea for a comic product you'd like to see Graphitti Designs produce. Randomly selected readers can win...

Grand Prize (1): The Mound of Merchandise! One reader will receive an Astro City limited edition print (signed by Alex Ross!), a TUG & buster T-shirt, a Madman beach towel, a Groo "Cheese Dip" cold-cast sculpture, a Doc Savage sculpted pin, a Mr. Monster: Origins limited edition hardcover, a Chaos! Comics Christmas magnet set, a Witchblade T-shirt, a Too Much Coffee Man T-shirt, a Chaos! Halloween embroidered jacket (size XL), a Sandman: The Wake T-shirt, a *Marvels* hardcover, a Bone magnet set, a set of six Groo cloisonné pins, an Evil Ernie T-shirt, a set of Chaos! Comics coasters, a Lady Death glass mug, a *Songs from the Xenozoic Age* CD, a Milk and Cheese magnet set and a *Life of Groo* graphic album! Whew!

Runner-up (20): Twenty readers will each receive a Milk and Cheese magnet set and a *Life of Groo* graphic album.

This contest is sponsored by Graphitti Designs, the maestros of merchandising!

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Mound of Merchandise Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is April 30, 1997.

Legal Graffiti

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, sponsor and their immediate families or the cast of "American Graffiti". Get it? 'Cause like, the name of the company is Graphitti and we're, like in Amer...oh screw you. Forget it. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and write what kind of comic merchandise you'd like to see produced. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Mound of Merchandise Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Personally, we'd like to see Nick Fury-brand cigars. Nuthin's more wholesome than that. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on May 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after May 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Mound of Merchandise Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Merchandise Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

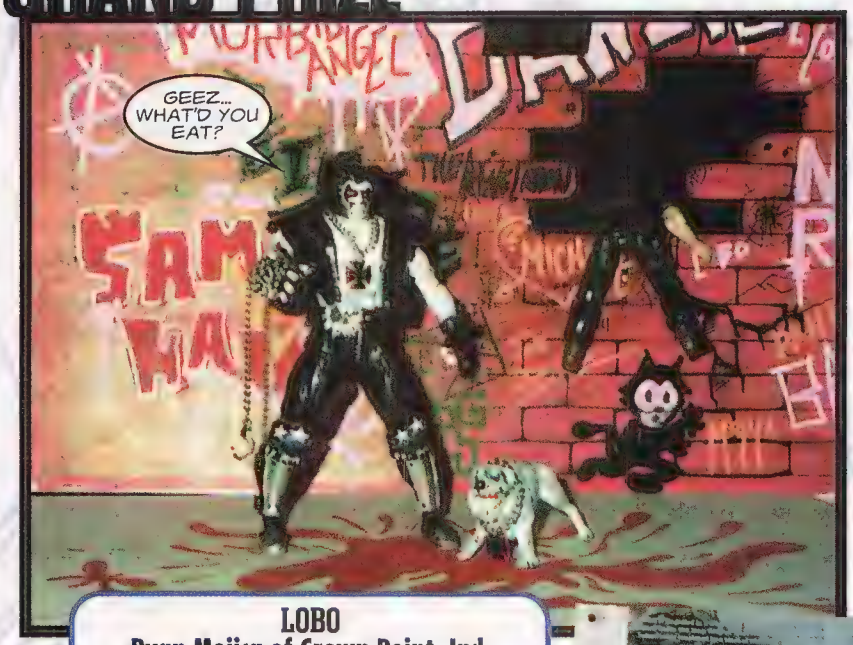
Phone Number (with area code) _____

What kinda comic product you wanna see? _____

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE



All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of these truly talented creators will receive a Willitts Designs film cel from the "X-Files" TV series. The Runner-Up will also get a copy of *The X-Files #7* signed by Stefan Petrucha, and the Grand Prize Winner makes off with the signed comic and a boxed set of four matched-number "X-Files" cels! Top-notch work, folks!

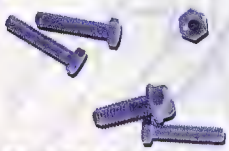
Thanks a bunch to the Willitts Designs people for the way-cool prizes!

Willitts DESIGNS

LOBO

Ryan Mojica of Crown Point, Ind.

Once a Toy Biz Weapon X figure, Ryan modified it into this cool looking Lobo (who, unlike his portrayal in the *Marvel vs. DC* fight, would have kicked Wolvie's butt in real life).



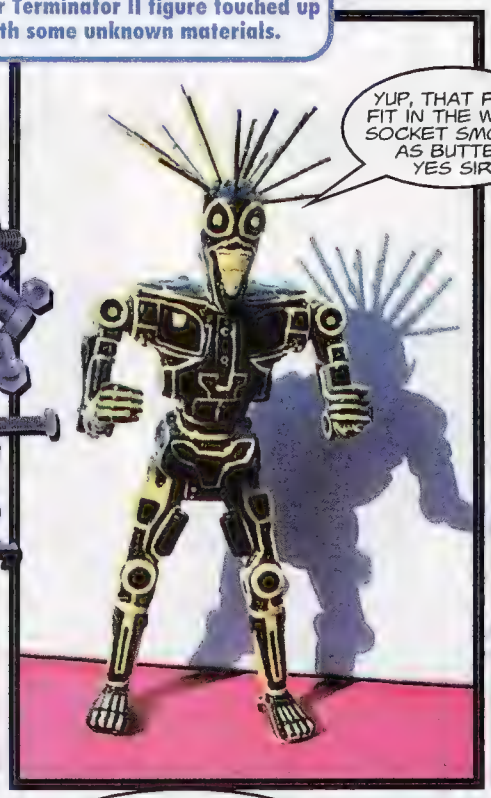
RUNNER-UP

THE CLASSIC AVENGERS

Trevor Ellis of Brockton, Mass.

"Avengers Assemble!!!" This beautiful rendition of Earth's Mightiest Heroes is a prime example of repaints galore of a wide selection of Toy Biz figures.

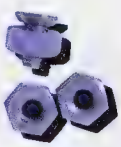
C-5RX (HOTH BASE DROID)
Gary Weaver II of Norman, Okla.
C-5RX is a repainted C3PO of the recent Star Wars: Power of the Force line. For those of you who don't remember him, C-5RX was bouncing around the Hoth Base in "The Empire Strikes Back," hanging with the Wampas.



WARLOCK
Billy Hadder of Manassas Park, Va.
This wacky New Mutant stems from a Kenner Terminator II figure touched up with some unknown materials.

TASKMASTER
Felipe Monaco Sinofsky of Miami, Fla.
This supervillain trainer is a repainted Secret Wars Doctor Doom with a freshly painted Secret Wars Cap shield.

BONE
Arthur Min of Gainesville, Fla.
Awww...how cute!!! Fone Bone here is completely hand-sculpted. Don't he look neat? (And don'tcha wish there were Bone action figures around?)



HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

The Real World

Jon Lewis leaves the swamp behind and faces life with brand-new 'Spectacles'

Ask critically acclaimed creator Jon Lewis what his biggest challenge was in starting up his all-new series, *Spectacles*. Getting comfortable with several new characters? Nope. Adopting new storytelling techniques? Uh-uh. Establishing a convincing tone? Not even close. Try learning to draw...cars. "I'm amazed that I've been able to draw a few cars that are at least recognizable for what they are," the 26-year-old Florida resident claims. "I always thought if I ever did a story about the real world I'd alter it in one way: There'd be no cars. Maybe I could have people riding giant snakes or something."

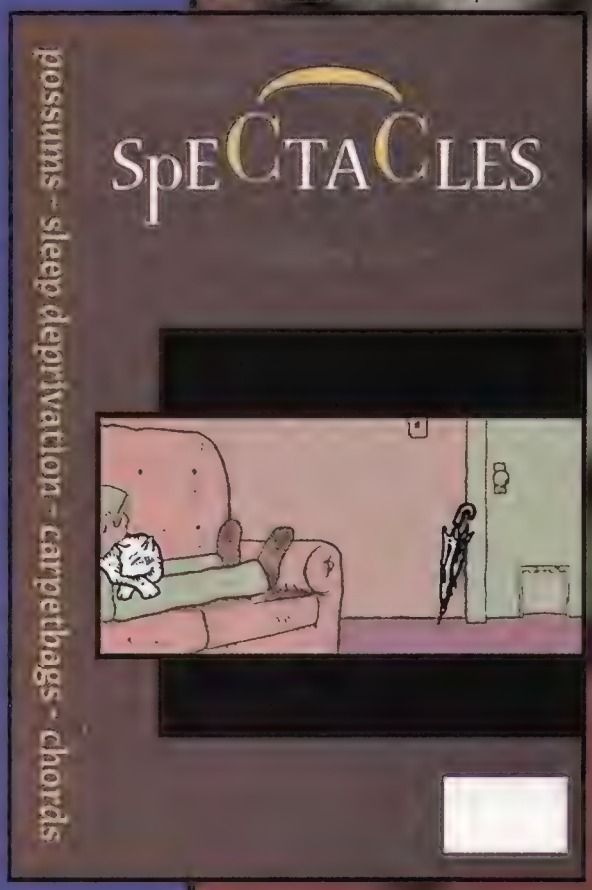
There's an obvious reason why Lewis would feel more comfortable drawing humans on the backs of misproportioned serpents. His first series, *True Swamp*, had a virtually human-free cast (*Spectacles* marks the first time that Lewis will devote himself to reality-based fiction). Lewis' debut series, which began in '94, lived up to half of its name by taking place in a swamp, but the stories were anything but true. The main character was a contemplative talking frog named Lenny who spent his time searching for meaning and dealing with the other denizens of the swamp. Even though he had slimy skin and liked to hop around, Lenny's struggles seemed oddly human, due in part to Lewis' skills as a writer.

With *Spectacles*, Lewis takes his introspective writing and applies it to short slice-of-life stories and the continuing tale "The Frost Changes." This extended storyline interweaves Scandinavian folklore (Lewis' interest in the subject comes from his own Norwegian heritage) into a narrative that has the meandering qualities and conversational tone of real folk tales. Like his earlier comics, *Spectacles* promises to be a fascinating read. Lewis' work is so engaging because he has a fine eye for details that go unnoticed by most—like the nuances of early morning mist that blankets a city or the act of folding back and smoothing a paperback book page while reading late at night. Lewis' cartooning includes just the right amount of detail to evoke a familiar mood or setting without being too particular or recognizable.

Lewis' distinctive storytelling depends a great deal on his artwork. *Spectacles* has allowed Lewis to explore a new side of his cartooning that was not apparent before. "With *True Swamp* I had much more of a sense that the artwork had to be very precise," he explains. "I tried to make the animal characters look consistent, at least to a certain extent. Since I've started doing stories with human beings as the characters, for some reason I've just naturally gone [in] the direction of the artwork being more loose and the characters being recognizable by visual idiosyncrasies. Animals are less familiar, and therefore you have to do more to represent them on the page. I'm sort of thinking of my human characters as puppets. They're certainly not supposed to be representational. They're very simple little contraptions that somehow evoke real people. I think that's a wonderful phenomenon."

Even though he's having fun adapting his style to new challenges, Lewis has moments of uncertainty about his future in comics. "I go through big phases where I think I should be a prose writer," he says. "I have a little bit of a natural drawing talent, but it seems like

Above left: Meet Mo, from the story 'Land of the Early Bird'
Below: The first issue of Jon Lewis' *Spectacles*

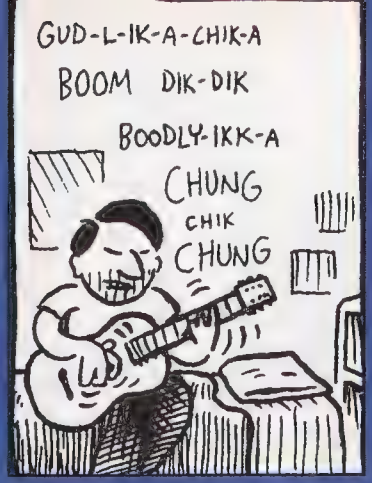


by tom palmer jr.

Above: One guy's opinion of the wandering Finn (pictured far right) Right: In "Eye of Potential Harm," Richard learns just how big alligators get

everything that I get done in the graphic department is just sheer work—forcing it to look good, building it up from nothing. It seems like I never sit down and have these nice-looking panels come out of my pencil. I always start from this ugly, awkward thing and refine it laboriously, whereas when I write prose, it's something that comes naturally to me."

Despite whatever doubts he may have, Lewis plans to stick with his craft. "I think I need both things [writing and drawing]," he says. "I need that feeling of facility, but I also need that feeling of real challenge and craftsman-like striving." Let's hope that he's challenged enough to keep making comics for a long time, the comics world will be that much better with more Jon Lewis stories to read and enjoy. W



Tom Palmer Jr. wishes he could ride around on a great big snake. That would be pretty damn keen. Too bad he's afraid of snakes. Wuss.

FYI

The first issue of the quarterly *Spectacles* series will be out in February from Alternative Press (the fine folks who also publish *Indy Magazine*). If you can't find a copy at your local comic shop, you can write them at 611 NW 34th Drive, Gainesville, FL 32607 (sample issues are $2.95 plus $1 for shipping), call them at (352) 373-6336 or check out the *Spectacles* Website at **http://www.indyworld.com/spectacles**. Copies of Lewis' earlier series, *True Swamp* and *Ghost Ship*, are still available (as well as *The Memoirs of Lenny the Frog*, a *True Swamp* paperback) from Slave Labor Graphics. Contact them at 979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128 or call 1-800-866-8929 for a free catalog.

Jon Lewis' Recommended Reading

"Most of my favorite comics right now are being done by my friends, so they're easy for me to remember. I love *The Sands* by Tom Hart, and I really think people should check that out. I think Jason Lutes' *Berlin* is great so far; a really satisfying development and progression from what he was doing in *Jar of Fools*. *Girlhero* by Megan Kelso is consistently adventurous and rewarding. *King of Persia* by Walt Holcombe was a great graphic novel which has a potentially wide appeal and a lot of charm. I also like *The Trespassers* by Joe Zabel and Gary Dumm, and Dylan Horrocks' *Pickle* is always one of my favorites. And my buddy Ed Brubaker, who did *Lowlife*, is working on a new project. He's read me scripts over the phone and it's amazing."

Recommended Reading

Artbabe Now that she's brought her self-published small press comic to Fantagraphics, you're bound to start hearing a lot about Jessica Abel and her wonderful comic *Artbabe*. One of the best things about *Artbabe* is that the characters not only look like real human beings (Abel is an excellent artist capable of subtly suggesting a wide range of emotions through expression and body language), but they act the way most people act in real life. The last issue of *Artbabe* (#5, which was subtitled *The Four Seasons* and happens to be the best so far) came out last summer. If you missed it, write to Jessica Abel at P.O. Box 642773, Chicago, IL 60664-2773 and send $3 for a copy. The first issue of the new Fantagraphics-published volume two hits stores in April, so now is the best time to get an early start by bugging your local comic shop to order it. You can be one of the first kids on your block to get *Artbabe*! If your favorite store is run by a bunch of ninnies, you can contact Fantagraphics directly at 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115 or (800) 697-1100.

Suburban Nightmares Artist Michael Cherkas and writer Larry Hancock have just released another collection of *Suburban Nightmares* stories. Anybody who grew up in the suburbs will get a kick out of these stories, which play off of that creepy sameness of suburban life. Why do Mom and Dad act funny sometimes? Are they really alien spies? Who is that weird guy who lives next door? And why are there different cars parked in front of his house every day? Cherkas' bold brushwork captures the perfect mood, and Hancock's excellent scripts lend a sense of realism and honesty to these stories. For more information on the latest collection, *Suburban Nightmares: Childhood Secrets*, write to NBM, 185 Madison Ave., Suite 1504, New York, NY 10016. And make sure to ask for their nifty catalog full of tons of enjoyable graphic novels.

The Ortiz Bros.

ARACHNIS

It's the year 2000...

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The Third Millennium.

A Reign Of Evil Has

Invaded Earth, And

Mankind Cries For

Salvation. But,

Jonathan Blackwell

Screams For...

...Retribution!

RETRIBUTION! • PART 1 OF 4 • MAY 1997

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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

X-MAN

X-citing characters are lost in convolution

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative team: Terry Kavanagh, Roger Cruz and Bud LaRosa
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: A lot. Nate Grey is a powerful telepath/telekinetic from an alternate-Earth reality where mutants and humans fought a genetic war ("The Age of Apocalypse"). Nate was the creation of that world's version of the evil mutant Mr. Sinister, who told Nate he melded the DNA of his world's Cyclops and Jean Grey to make him. When that reality was destroyed, Nate traveled to "our" reality where he met up with familiar faces who're quite different versions of the folks from his world. He now lives in Manhattan with fellow mutant Threnody, a former spy for this world's Mr. Sinister. His powers, however, are so strong they threaten to destroy both him and our world.

The Good: Nate has personality. For someone with a mysterious past, there's enough of a personality and an almost innocent quality that makes you care about X-Man. To quote Marvel of old, he's "trapped in a world he never made," and you really get that feeling when he talks to various X-Men in almost an indifferent or disappointed manner—you see, these Earth counterparts don't live up to those of his world. His relationship with Threnody is well-developed and their budding romance keeps you interested in their next move.

For an X-book, this series is surprisingly reader-friendly, even with its confusing premise. The creators give you just enough information so you can follow what's going on. Even the two "Onslaught" issues (#18-#19) were accessible. When X-Force showed up in #18, all their names and powers were given, clueing in new readers.

The Bad: This book is mired in convoluted plotlines. If you don't know about "The Age of Apocalypse," "Inferno," the Hellfire Club and tons of other X-facts, you miss the big picture in *X-Man*. Unfortunately, these chaotic, outta control storylines are considered the norm for today's X-books. If any book published today needs a recap box explaining who X-Man is and what his powers are, this is it.

While we don't wanna be ol' fuddy-duds, we still have a major problem with Nate and Threnody stealing all the time. It's not just that it makes them poor role models, but it makes Nate a hypocrite. He tells Threnody to stop stealing, and then he turns right around and steals things himself.

The Buzz: There's already tons of buzz on this book, which consistently ranks in the Top 20 best-selling comics list each month. Fans dig it.

The Skinny: If you just take the two characters of Nate and Threnody trying to get by in NYC, it's a good read. But there's so much convoluted X-Men baggage, that it seriously hurts this title.

(Above) *The relationship between Nate and Threnody is well-handled*

(At left) *Unexplained references to convoluted storylines sometimes make X-Man a tough read*

The Verdict: 3

THE SAVAGE DRAGON

This book's a savagely funny read

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Image Comics
Creative Team: Erik Larsen
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: The Dragon's a tough cop in Chicago, who also happens to be green, super-strong and has a fin on his head—how he got that way, he doesn't know. While protecting Chicago's citizens, he also lends an occasional hand to the local superhero community (namely Freak Force) and has a rocky romance with the superheroine Rapture.

The Good: This book has a humorous, kooky and outrageous tone to it. You can't help but like it. Examples: The *God Comics* centerfold in issue #31 left us in stitches (especially when Larsen copyrighted God, Jesus and Hitler!); the dirty knock-down fight between God and Satan in the same issue; and a villain team consisting of the disgustingly powered Belcher, Cesspool and Backfire (figure out their powers, yet?). All of these are just part of the over-the-top outrageousness this series thrives upon.

The characterization and interplay between the Dragon and Rapture are great, and that's due to some very realistic dialogue. The storytelling's good, too. There's good pacing and Larsen's money shots really deliver (like the full-page shot of Rapture asking Dragon to marry her in #27, or Phil's physical transformation at the end of #32).

Also, you never know where this series is going. There are so many twists and turns, it quickly hooks you right in. When Rapture reveals to Dragon that she's pregnant with his child, you wonder if she's lying, if it's really his (Dragon's supposedly sterile) and what'll happen to the kid when—and if—it's born. And who could've predicted that AIDS patient Phil would turn into a Dragon-lookalike following a transfusion from the Dragon, only to literally explode a few pages into the very next issue?

The Bad: With a "Savage Dragon" cartoon, Dragon action figures and superhero-like covers, parents and readers may think this comic is for kids. But the language and sexual content are pretty inappropriate for the audience that's deceptively led to read it. A "suggested for mature readers" label would alert potential buyers to the somewhat adult nature of the series, without having to censor the book.

The book's occasional guest stars are unnecessary and take away from the Dragon. Spawn (#30), the Maxx (#28) and Wild-Star (#29) were thrown into the main stories without really explaining who they were. *Savage Dragon* #30 actually continued from *Spawn* #52, but you wouldn't know it, 'cause it's never mentioned. This book needs a "What Happened Before..." box, similar to *Spawn*'s. Also: There's way too many supporting characters. While they're interesting, they take away from the main star of the book, the Dragon.

The Buzz: There's a strong and loyal following of *The Savage Dragon*, and Larsen continues to crank it out on a monthly basis all by his lonesome. Fans wouldn't want it any other way.

The Skinny: *Savage Dragon* is a guilty pleasure. While it often goes way overboard on violence, T&A shots and too many supporting characters, the book is still a lot of fun.

(Above and right) Savage Dragon is often outrageously funny (but can also cross the line of good taste)

The Verdict: 4

PREACHER

Finally—fans' prayers are answered

Genre: Adult action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Genesis (an angel/demon hybrid entity) has combined with Rev. Jesse Custer, granting him "The Word," the power to control people's actions with his voice. Jesse was also granted vast knowledge, including the fact that God has been in hiding on Earth ever since Genesis' birth, which has given him a mission: to seek out God and ask him what the hell is going on.
The Good: *Preacher* is a complete accomplishment of stories told in graphic form.

The drama that unfolds is so tense and striking that there are moments in this story where your mind actually creates a musical soundtrack to it—that's how powerful this series is.

And speaking of power, the in-your-face stories told in *Preacher* are completely and utterly entertaining. Much like real life, they never fail to surprise you. Though it has its fair share of twists, this book shocks you by following through on what it promises. Example: The Saint of Killers looking to kick some ass over the course of a few issues? Soon enough, he does—and it's surprising that there is a short-term make-good policy with this book, something a lot of series drag out.

A lot of the appeal of *Preacher* comes from its shock value, *a la* dark humor, violence and sexual situations. It shows you more than you'd ever think a comic book could, and makes you laugh with its absurd reality.

The motivations and dialogue make the characters seem very real; the characters react to situations much like you might—and even if you wouldn't react that way, you can understand their actions. (It doesn't hurt that the facial expressions get across what a character is feeling so well, it's amazing you never notice that there are *no thought balloons* in the book.)

This book isn't bogged down with too much dialogue, but what is spoken comes out with power. And the variety of dialects are straight on. (If you saw a word balloon minus art, you'd know exactly who was speaking.)

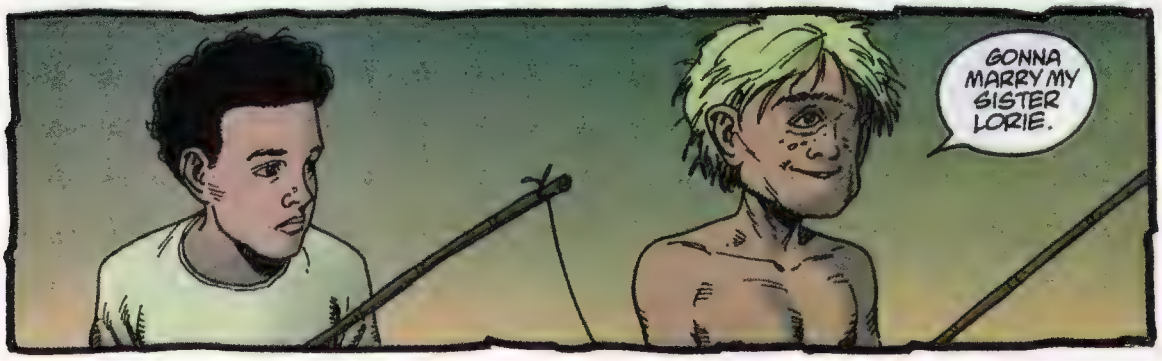
The story sticks to its direction, with the characters evolving as they go. Everything that happens to the people in this book has an impact upon their goals and their friendships in future issues. You're watching the characters evolve on the page as they experience new situations.

The Bad: Not much. The book could use a little more recapping of past events, as new readers might have trouble jumping on. Also, if you're squeamish, you won't appreciate the over-the-top violence.
The Buzz: This book is all buzz. Even if you haven't read it, you've heard how good it is.
The Skinny: *Preacher* is consistently one of the most entertaining and dramatic reads out there. It fails to disappoint. Reviewing it was a real hoot.

(Above) *The facial expressions always convey the mood perfectly to readers*

(Below) *The absurd reality of Jesse's inbred childhood friend adds to Preacher's dark humor*

The Verdict: 6



BATMAN & ROBIN ADVENTURES

This Dark-less Knight misses his mood and complexity

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Ty Templeton, Brandon Kruse and Rick Burchett
Price/Frequency: $1.75/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Based on the "Batman & Robin" animated series, this all-ages series tells stories outside of Batman's continuity.

The Good: This series tries to tell a straightforward story, and doesn't get caught up in being overly moody or dark, or gets bogged down in all of the Batman continuity and other Bat-books.

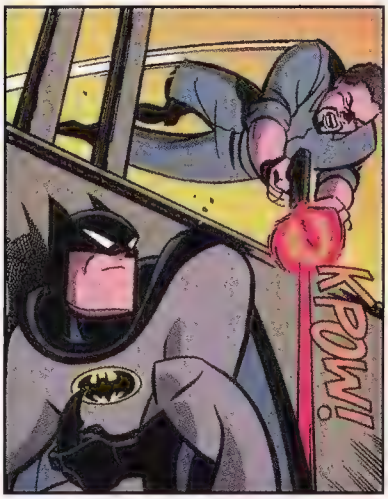
Without all of the "Bat"-ness we're used to, we're left with the basics of a comic book. *Batman and Robin Adventures* usually tells self-contained (or limited to two-issue) story arcs, and with its clean artwork is a fast, comfortable read. It's got a good morality to it (right and wrong are clearly defined), making it good wholesome fun in a style that's so successful, it's used in two TV cartoons ("Batman & Robin" and "Superman") and a handful of other comic books (*Adventures of Superman*, *Adventures in the DC Universe*, *Marvel Adventures*, etc.).

The book *is* successful at characterization, in a cartoony way. Recent issues that focused on Bane, Batgirl and Deadman gave us characters that had easy-to-understand personalities, and the stories wrapped neatly around them.

The Bad: Since the recent stories are so clean and uncluttered, the book has lost a lot of its complexity—something the series' predecessor, *Batman Adventures*, and the cartoon had enormous success with. Recent issues have fallen into a routine of having one twist or turn near the end of an issue, which usually wraps up the story. Without the mood or interesting subplots, turns or surprises, the book often becomes bland.

This makes this book either a very quick read for the older fan (we went through an issue in about 5 minutes) or a decent read for the younger fan. Either way, $1.75 seems a bit high, especially when Marvel puts out series like *Marvel Adventures* (based on Marvel's numerous animated series) for $.99.

Also, when a lot of guest characters appear (Scarecrow, Talia, Batgirl), it is assumed that the readers know what they're all about. But since the series is taken out of continuity, many new Bat-fans are picking this book up. A little background info would help a great deal.



The Buzz: This cartoony style has caught on (*Adventures of Superman*, *Adventures in the DC Universe*, *Marvel Adventures*, etc.) with a lot of fan appeal.

The Skinny: While a fun book, *Batman and Robin Adventures* lacks the substance or mood it needs to fill the spaces these rapid-paced stories leave. It sorely misses the edge that *Batman Adventures* and the animated series had.

(Above) *The cartoony action style makes* Batman & Robin *a quick read*

(At left) *The climactic twists—like Batgirl's creation of tear gas—have become bland*

The Verdict: 3

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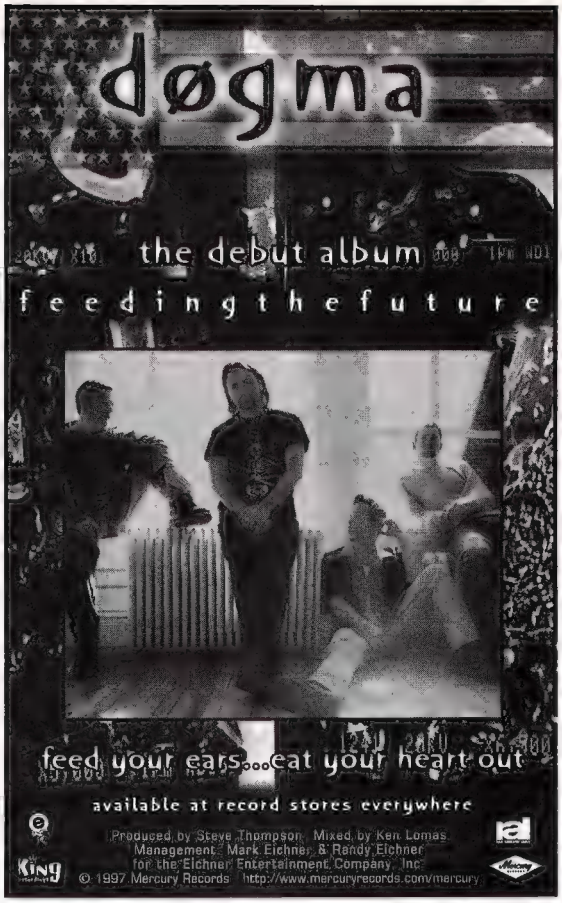

DARKCHYLDE

#4 FEAR EDITION

Randy Queen returns with one of the hottest books of the year, & Cavalcade's got the exclusive variant edition! The DARKCHYLDE #4 FEAR EDITION features a new cover by Queen & is limited to 4000 copies. There will be no other variant editions of Darkchylde #4 on the market. Copies of the Darkchylde #4 Fear Edition are only $15 each!

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PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN MARCH

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #1

AQUAMAN #32

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #1-#2

DC COMICS Woo-hoo! DC's bringing every major character, hero and villain from the DCU into the animation styles of the *Batman & Robin Adventures*. The first ish brings together the JLA to fight an unknown menace who's assembled a group of bad guys including Gorilla Grodd and The Parasite. The second spanky-keen ish brings us a Flash solo story AND a double-spiffy Catwoman backup story. Go buy 'em. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. **$1.75 each**

AQUAMAN #32

DC COMICS Wow, it's the team-up that no one's been demanding: Aquaman and Swamp Thing! DC's resident one-fisted water whiz and the canceled swamp-themed elemental hero join forces to take on the crazed plant life that's threatening the Earth with total…uh…evil-plant stuff! Can our heroes defeat the plants?!? By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY #8

IMAGE Uh-oh…them unpleasant alien-types continue their invasion of Earth while the U.S. government and Earth's heroes spend their time at each other's throats trying to decide what to do about it. But there's a hidden truth behind the invasion that only one hero, the Confessor, knows…but he ain't talkin'. Jerk. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

AZTEK: THE ULTIMATE MAN #10

DC COMICS The Justice League makes a special appearance to join up with Aztek, but it might not be of their own volition. The Q-society, which trained Aztek, just might be manipulating everyone…those crazy monks. Oh, and by the way, save your stamps with that whole "Save Aztek" campaign. DC pulled the plug on this book faster than you could say, "That sucks." Sigh. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, N. Steven Harris and Keith Champagne. **$1.75**

BATMAN/ALIENS #1 (OF 2)

DARK HORSE/DC COMICS What's the one horror the Dark Knight Detective has never matched wits with? A sloppy-drunk Alfred roaming the mansion nekkid as a jailbird? Nope, that was in last month's *Batman & Robin Adventures*. This two-ish nightmare pits Bats against them foamy alien types while down in Southern Mexico pokin' around some Mayan ruins. By Ron Marz, Bernie Wrightson and Matt Hollingsworth. That swell guy Marz says, "There's three aliens and one other surprise for Batman. The entire story takes place in one night in the ruins of the jungle. Batman is partnered with sort of a covert operations team of four guys and one woman. They're not exactly thrilled to be paired up with each other, but they're in the same place at the same time, so they don't have a whole lot of choice." **$4.95**

BATMAN AND ROBIN ADVENTURES #18

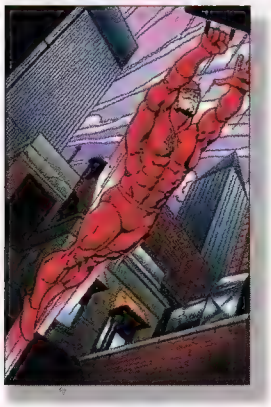
DC COMICS The clown prince of crime in a slump? Yep, that's what it looks like. So what does the Joker's faithful cohort, Harley Quinn, do? She thinks up some really nasty things that'll put a smile back on her man's face (get your mind out of the gutter). Unfortunately, none of them work. Could this be the end of the Joker's crime spree? By Ty Templeton, Brandon Kruse and Terry Beatty. **$1.75**

BATMAN: LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #94

DC COMICS Saul Fisher: Gotham City citizen, trapped in an elevator with

BATMAN/ALIENS #1

BATMAN AND ROBIN ADVENTURES #18



DAREDEVIL #364

HITMAN #14

other ordinary citizens, targeted by a terrorist. As the various players in this little play wonder how their Dark Knight will come and save them, the question remains: Will Batman arrive in time? By Michael T. Gilbert. **$1.95**

BONE #28

CARTOON BOOKS It's back to basics for *Bone*. No more Red Dragon, Gran'ma Ben or Thorn. It's just Fone and Smiley Bone trying to get away from all the fighting that's been happening in the valley. Plus, they have to get the orphaned rat creature back to its mama (that should be fun). They also meet Rockjaw, the master of the Eastern border. But is he friend or foe? And is his jaw really made of rock? By Jeff Smith, who says, "People have been letting me know that they want more funny stuff back in the book. I listened. We found a good breaking point and we're gonna get back to falling off cliffs and that kind of stuff. There's not gonna be anything but Fone Bone and Smiley Bone for a while. It's the start of a new storyline, so it's a great place to pick up the books if you haven't tried it before." **$2.95**

BRAINBANX #3 (OF 6)

HELIX/DC ORC, the company that was growing human brains in animals, finally gets caught thanks to Anna (she's the telepath with the ability to carry another person's mind in hers). The problem is, Anna's on the run from the ORC people she ratted out. Now she's trapped on ORC's homeworld with all its freak experiments ready to rip her to shreds. By Elaine Lee and Temujin. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #364

MARVEL Noooooo

through all of these undead critters. (Two words: Sorry Charlie.) By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

IMPULSE #25

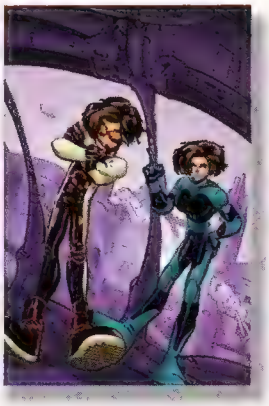
DC COMICS What is it with the 30th century and the Allen family? First Iris Allen turns up alive there, then Bart is born and now XS (yep, she's related to the Allens) is in the Legion of Super-Heroes. What's the deal? Anyway, Bart and his mom reappear in the future where Earth's President finds a new target for his grudge against the entire Allen family. By Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

JLA #5

DC COMICS Need a job? Hey, why not join the JLA? You get to hang with some pretty cool people and save the world once in a while. Be prepared to stand in line, though, as Hitman, Supergirl, Aztek and even Max Mercury show up for membership. But they might as well make like a tree and split with the arrival of...Tomorrow Woman! Who is she and why is her boot destined for the JLA's collective ass? By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. Morrison says, "It's the story of the membership drive. I wanted the JLA to be like the Knights of the Round Table, so there's gotta be 12. We're not telling anyone who the last member is gonna be. It's somebody well-known, but someone who's never been involved with the JLA much. When we get this new member in, it's gonna add some drama and tension. Then that will be it. We'll keep those 12 as permanent." **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #1

MARVEL Dr. Doom? Magneto? Galactus? Bah! Have no fear, Ka-Zar the Savage is here! Armed with his really sharp knife and clad in his battle-loincloth, none may stay his unkempt hand of justice! This ish: some evil, vile bad guys wanna corrupt the Savage Land and only Ka-Zar and his saber-toothed tiger pal Zabu can save the day! Woo-hoo! Prepare to be whipped up into a total jungle-frenzy! By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. Waid says, "There's somebody who has been sent to the Savage Land, a man named Gregor, the guy who trained Kraven the Hunter. He's bad news. He's been sent there by enemies of Ka-Zar's past and we're not sure why he's there, but he is in the Savage Land trying to get Ka-Zar into a whole heap of trouble." **$1.95**



IMPULSE #25

JLA #5

READ THIS BOOK!

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #5

HOMAGE There's a giant festival in Devil's Echo that happens on Halloween night, and as everyone knows, Halloween's one of those weird nights. This year, Chance Falconer and St. George, her dragon, are caught up in the strange events of the parade. Some kid's pet is stolen by a gang calling themselves The Beehive, so Chance and St. George are soon on the case, tracking down the villains. But they just might be in over their heads when they find out that The Beehive will do just about anything to keep the stolen animal. By James Robinson and Paul Smith. Robinson says of the ish, "We'll focus on the different ethnic areas during Halloween night in Devils Echo, going from Little Cairo, which is the Egyptian area, and culminating in the Scottish part of town. We'll really get an overview of the city from the ground level with Chance. I'd really like *Leave it to Chance* to be like an issue of *Batman* where you don't need to know a lot about her history, you can just get into the adventure." **$2.50**

KANE #16

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS There's a wacko sniper loose in Independence Park who's already taken down two police officers. What to do? Why, just call in Sgt. Nelson of the New Eden police to do something about it. But what can *he* do? Well, launching a full-scale attack on the entire block would pretty much cover the situation. Yeah, the entire block might be destroyed, but as long as that sniper's caught it doesn't really matter, does it? By Paul Grist. **$3.50**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #92

DC COMICS Things are gonna start getting real crazy for the Legion. After their little mishap in the time stream, they've landed in 1958, with no memory of their former lives. They're all going about their business as high school students when a monster from outer space attacks! Sound kooky-fun? Toss in the fact that the space-monster is one of their teammates and BAMMO!, house-burnin' fun. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Ron Boyd. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #48

DC COMICS "Dawn of the Dark Lord," Part 1 (of 3). Run! The Dreaded Mordru (that evil wizard guy) is back! And so is Emerald Violet, formerly the Legion's Shrinking Violet, who was corrupted by the Emerald Eye. Anyway, both of 'em are back and they both want the Emerald Eye. Looks like it's up to the Legion to stop 'em. Plenty o' ass-kickin' by Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. Stern says, "When I was a teen reading *Adventure Comics* and Jim Shooter was writing the Legion, he did a story with Mordru. It was a great story and for the next 15 years I was looking for the previous story with the first Mordru, but couldn't find it. Years later, I'm working with Shooter at Marvel and he [tells me], 'There never was a first Mordru story. Except for those flashbacks, I made that all up.' When I was asked to work on the Legion stories, I knew we were going to do that first Mordru story. I'm gonna send Jim a copy when we're all done." **$2.25**

LORDS OF MISRULE #3 (OF 6)

DARK HORSE Oh boy, Jack's in a lot of trouble. The cops think he chopped up Jo Hanlon, his late girlfriend. Then some unimaginable dog

beast comes out of nowhere and attacks him. He even gets swarmed by a horde of rats. (Lucky guy.) All because of something that's going on in his old hometown of Callow. By Dan Abnett, John Tomlinson, Steve White and Peter Snejbjerg. **MR $2.95**

POISON ELVES #22

SIRIUS Wimmens. You can't live with 'em and you can't kill 'em. Unfortunately, Lusiphur didn't kill his ex-wife, Hyena, so guess what? Yep, she's back and she's here to mess with Lusiphur's head. And with her return, Lusiphur's life will never be the same. Count on seeing some major outbursts and some interesting situations between ex-husband and wife. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

POWER OF SHAZAM #26

DC COMICS Things are real screwy in Fawcett City and it's probably 'cause that sneaky bald bastard Sivana's mucking with the events that created Captain Marvel. So now everything's messed up! This time, Sivana's gotten the good Captain (who just happens to be Billy Batson's father in Sivana's whacked-out world), framed for murder. That could prove bad for the rest of his family. Holy Moley! That just ain't right! By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause and Mike Manley. **$1.75**

PREACHER #25

VERTIGO/DC "Cry Blood, Cry Erin," Part 1 (of 2). Here's an issue that everyone's been waitin' for...the tale of how Cassidy became a vampire. Take a trip back to 1916 with the Irish Republican Army (Cassidy's an Irish vampire) and find out just what the hell happened to turn such a nice young man into a bloodthirsty creature of the night. Bet on lots of blood, gore and a great story. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #2

ACCLAIM You wanna see the greatest superhero team? Well, this ain't it. Although it is one of the funniest. Quantum and Woody, best friends as kids until Woody mysteriously disappeared, have reunited and are now trying to figure out who killed their fathers. With their new abilities, things might be a little easier...or not. Don't count on a typical superhero book read. By Christopher Priest, M.D. Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

ROBIN #41

DC COMICS Ariana's still pretty messed up over her near date rape and Tim's gotta do all he can to help her work through the pain. While he's doing that, the streets are being guarded by the Spoiler, who's got her hands full with the Ghost Dragons, a gang tryin' to expand its territory. It's gonna be a rough night for both of them. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #1

QUANTUM AND WOODY #2

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #50

DC COMICS "The Scarlet Ghost," Part 2 (of 4). Writing pulp novels is a risky business in itself, but when someone starts knocking off the authors, it gets even worse. Sandman's gotta figure out who's behind the murders before more people are killed and before Wesley Dodds' girlfriend, Dian Belmont, breaks into the writing business and becomes the next victim. By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle, Guy Davis and Daniel Torres. **MR $3.50**

SIN CITY: SEX AND VIOLENCE

DARK HORSE Delia's a hot babe who ain't your typical woman. She's into that killing thing, so you don't want to rub her the wrong way (though she does like to be rubbed). She's into sex and violence, and she's got her first assignment. Someone's gonna get killed. But we're bettin' they're gonna

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns 10th Anniversary (DC)

It's been 10 years, so if you haven't had a chance to read the four-issue *Dark Knight Returns* mini-series, you better get to it. It's one of the best Batman tales ever! In addition to the entire *Dark Knight Returns* series, this edition has some cool features like a new introduction, end papers and chapter headings by artist/writer Frank Miller himself. As an added bonus, there's also the plot to issue #4 and extra material from Miller's sketchbook. Take a look and see what you've been missing. By Frank Miller and Klaus Janson. **$14.95**

Concrete: Think Like a Mountain (Dark Horse)

All six issues of Paul Chadwick's mini-series are in this trade paperback. Check out the history of the Earth First! group and how they sucker Concrete into helping them. All he wanted to do was find something to write about and their group seemed like a good thing. But then he somehow got involved with their plots to stop the people who want to destroy Earth. If helping out the environment is pretty high on your list of good things, give this a read. By Paul Chadwick. **$17.95**

Poison Elves Volume 3: Desert of the Third Sin (Sirius)

The original *Poison Elves* series was published by Mulehide Graphics and those issues are pretty darn hard to find. But now, you can have them. *Desert of the Third Sin* collects issues #13-#18, the final Mulehide issues. Witness the early adventures of that demented elf Lusiphur. By Drew Hayes. **$14.95**

have a good ol' time before they're bumped off. By Frank Miller. **$2.95**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #5

IMAGE Remember that naked sculpture of Francine in the lobby where she works? Well, this ish tells the tale of just how that happened. It seems that back in Francine's college days, she had a crush on this sculptor, who convinced her to pose. But guess what? The first time the statue was unveiled was at Homecoming. Poor Francine. (Mental Note: Don't trust sculptors.) By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

STRAY BULLETS #13

EL CAPITÁN Okay, get this. There's a dead, five-legged cow that no one knows what to do with, Nina's talking to Virginia (who recently reappeared as a disembodied head), and a big sex scandal erupts in the town of Seaside, something that doesn't usually happen. Sounds more like an episode of "Picket Fences" than an issue of *Stray Bullets*. By David Lapham. **$2.95**

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #2

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #21

THUNDERBOLTS #2

MARVEL After Franklin Richards is kidnapped (for like the bazillionth time) by the Mad Thinker, the Thunderbolts launch into action to save the kid. And they get to strut their stuff again for the national media who seems to be taking to their heroics quite nicely. Shame they don't know the truth about these slimeballs. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$1.95**

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #2 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC CIA Agent William Clyde knows something's going on that involves the Unknown Soldier and he's hell bent on finding out just what it is. When he discovers some new information, it sends him into the hands of Screwball, a deadly black ops agent who has no qualms about killing a nosy CIA agent. By Garth Ennis and Kilian Plunkett. **MR $2.50**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #21

MARVEL Mutant Alert! Mutant Alert! The wall-crawler meets the X-Men this ish. Seems there's this menace named Menace who's bothering Spider-Man and the X-Men, too. So what else would ya expect, but a classic team-up? The original Spidey and the original X-Men. This oughtta be innerestin'. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson. **99 CENTS.**

AT A GLANCE

A LISTING OF THE HIGH-PROFILE BOOKS SHIPPING IN MARCH

Batman #542 (DC)
A faceless killer called Faceless wreaks havoc by killing Gothamites. **$1.95**

Curse of the Spawn #7 (Image)
A killer is on the loose and ready to cut up New York's police dept. Can Sam and Twitch stop the madness? **$1.95**

Darkchylde #5 (Image)
Ariel's gotta stop Kauldron's plans of overrunning Earth with creatures from the nightmare realm. **$2.50**

The Darkness #4 (Image)
Jackie's just getting used to working with his new power, while the mob adjusts to the newest member in its ranks. **$2.50**

Detective Comics #709 (DC)
After Lucius Fox is shot, Batman sets out to find whoever did it and comes face-to-face with Deathstroke. **$1.95**

DV8 #6 (Image)
Get a look inside the DV8 kids' heads, as Bliss plots against Threshold, Copycat falls in love with Frostbite, and Powerhaus and Sublime each have an interesting encounter. **MR $2.50**

Gen^{13} Bootleg #5 (Image)
Get to the bottom of the ghostly reason Fairchild has a 30-minute time lapse in her life. **$2.50**

Painkiller Jane vs. The Darkness—Stripper #1 (Event Comics)
Jackie and Jane are out to kill the same guy. But when they find him, they get something neither of 'em bargained for. **$2.95**

Pitt #13 (Full Bleed Studios)
Pitt's evil half-brother Wroth makes an entrance and there's gonna be a major fight. **$1.95**

Spawn #60 (Image)
Everything Spawn believed about his death turns out to have been lies. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books
Sensational Spider-Man #16 brings Decay back into Spider-Man's life. *Amazing Spider-Man #423* has a new and improved Electro after Spidey. *Peter Parker, Spider-Man #80* shows the real secrets behind S.H.O.C., and in *Spectacular Spider-Man #246*, the Grizzly is back to wrassle with Spidey. **$1.95 each**

Superman Books
Superman: Man of Steel #67 has an ambassador from Kandor loose in Metropolis causing problems for Superman and his new powers. *Superman #123* is where Supes gets his new powers and brand-spankin' new costume. In *Adventures of Superman #546*, Metallo's back and using Superman's new powers to boost his own might. *Action Comics #733* has Superman going to the Ray for advice on how to use his new powers. **$1.95 each**

Uncanny X-Men #344 (Marvel)
The final battle in the X-Men vs. the Uncreated/Phalanx war. But could it cost one of the X-Men her life? **$1.95**

Vampirella vs. Pantha #1 (Harris)
The Bad Girls team up and go after someone who's killed a scientist. **$3.50**

WildC.A.T.s #36 (Image)
The WildC.A.T.s are joined by Union in their battle against the evil Crusade. **$2.50**

Witchblade #13 (Image)
Sara tries to figure out what model Dannette Boucher has to do with Kenneth Irons. **$2.50**

Wolverine #113 (Marvel)
Kitty Pryde comes to Wolverine's new home in the East Village, but finds an old enemy, Ogun, instead. **$1.95**

X-Files #28 (Topps)
Mulder and Scully are on the case of a Boy Scout troop leader killing members of the troop. **$2.95**

X-Man #27 (Marvel)
The new Hellfire Club tries to recruit Nate Grey for its latest member. **$1.95**

X-Men #64 (Marvel)
The X-Men are torn. Do they side with Sebastian Shaw of the Hellfire Club or the underworld mob boss, Kingpin? **$1.95**

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McFARLANE TOYS

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

NEXT SPIDER-SEASON SHOULD BE SPECTACULAR

By Rob Allstetter

John Semper has written a **Spider-Man** movie. No, it's not the long-awaited, live-action film from director James Cameron. Semper, the story editor on Fox's highly rated "Spider-Man" animated series, has written a five-part story arc for the show called "Six Forgotten Warriors," which he said is his stab at a Spidey movie script.

"Never in a million years would they let me write a Spider-Man feature, so I said, 'Gee, let's see. If you take a feature and break it down to half-hours, that's about five. Hmm…I think I'll write a five-parter,' " Semper said, laughing. "It's my take on what a Spider-Man feature should have been."

The episodes are self-contained and written in a top-to-bottom feature style, instead of five episodes strung together. The story teams Spider-Man with Captain America and other longtime heroes, including Miss America and The Whizzer.

"It's really cool. I've always wanted to do something like *Watchmen*," Semper said.

"It's Spider-Man interacting with six World War II heroes. They did something back then that has ramifications in the present, so the story bounces back and forth between World War II and the present. And Spider-Man has to find them and round them all up again to get to the bottom of the mystery."

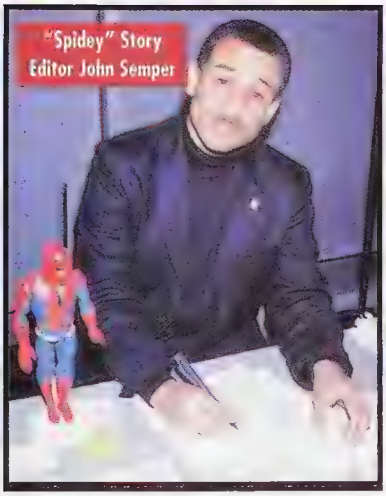
Semper researched many of the old Timely Comics to come up with the best characters to use, going through microfiche copies and tracking down old books. Captain America was always one of his favorite characters: "When it comes time to do him in animation, I hope I get [the job]," he said.

Upcoming "Spider-Man" episodes feature the closest thing you'll see to a Spidey movie

The story was part of what was planned for the fifth season of "Spider-Man," but Fox has been pushing up episodes, and it's quite likely all 65 produced episodes at Marvel Films will have been broadcast by the end of the 1997-98 season, the series' fourth.

Episodes originally planned for the fourth season of "Spider-Man"—some of which will air during this season, the show's third—fall under the umbrella of "Partners in Danger."

"We basically did a season of Spider-Man and the Black Cat," Semper said. "Everybody was always asking me, 'When are you going to do the Black Cat?' and I had always intended to. We bring back all of the previous villains, but there's a new twist because Spider-Man is fighting alongside the Black Cat. We get more mileage out of all


"Spidey" Story Editor John Semper

the favorite villains."

Spidey will not know that Felicia Hardy is the Black Cat, and Semper said there is an "interesting" backstory to how she'll get her powers. Look for appearances by Morbius, Kraven, Mysterio, Doctor Octopus, Scorpion and the Prowler. The "Partners in Danger" arc ends with The Punisher returning and the reappearance of Mary Jane.

Episodes originally planned for a fifth season include the "Six Forgotten Warriors" story arc, an episode returning Hydro-Man and then "Secret Wars," which leads into "Spider Wars." "Secret Wars," of course, is based on the 1980s Marvel crossover, but Semper said he's made it more "Spidey-centric." The Beyonder turns out to be the danger for which Madame Web has been preparing Spidey.

" 'Secret Wars' is a real turning point for Spider-Man—one entire theme I've been chasing since the 14th episode comes to a head," Semper said. "The only thing we weren't able to do for 'Secret Wars' is bring the X-Men back as a group, because it became cost-prohibitive. We did an early episode with the X-Men, and all I heard about was how expensive and difficult it was."

The X-Men's Storm will be appearing in "Secret Wars," though, along with the Fantastic Four and Captain America (but not the Avengers). Original plans for the Hulk to appear were scrapped because of the Hulk's series on UPN, and the Lizard was brought in to make the event more central to Spider-Man. And since Venom was already introduced on the series, the symbiote costume will not be an aspect of television's "Secret Wars."

Ironically, Semper was not a fan of the *Secret Wars* comic. "I hated the comic book. It just meandered," he said.

Semper's "Secret Wars" will last three episodes, leading to the final story arc. But what is "Spider Wars," also the theme of an upcoming toy line from Toy Biz, about? Semper was coy.

"There is an episode called, 'I Really, Really Hate Clones,' and I think that says it all right there," he said, laughing. "It's a very personal title, too."

So, clones will be popping up on the animated series, and rumors abound about a Peter/Mary Jane wedding, but Semper wouldn't reveal any more.

"Everyone should keep watching because every time you think you've nailed Spider-Man and know what we're going to do, we do something radically different," he said. "And that's probably what I'm the proudest of. You can never predict what's next."

Semper has basically been off "Spider-Man," which was produced at Marvel Films, since August. With Marvel's ever-tightening relationship with Fox and Saban Entertainment, it's doubtful any more episodes of "Spider-Man" will be made through Marvel Films.

"The show is a hit. It consistently gets better ratings than 'Batman' ever got, but they seem content to let it end at [episode] 65," Semper said. "I don't honestly know why. I hope if they do more, they will call me."

SHIRLEY SCORES SPAWN

Shirley Walker, who has worked on "Superman" and "Batman" in animation and "The Flash" in live-action, has been brought in to supervise the music of the **"Spawn"** animated series, which premieres this spring on HBO.

"HBO is not known for their huge budgets for music, so we're keeping that in mind," said Eric Radomski, supervising director of "Spawn." "But we do only have six episodes. And, as with 'Batman,' we took an approach of more live-action thinking, in terms of keeping the music where it's appropriate and not letting it be the dominant factor in the show.

"It's got to enhance things and set a mood and a tone, not become the commanding force in the series. We definitely want to convey emotion when Spawn is going through some of his memories."

Short previews of "Spawn," including interviews with Radomski and Executive Producer and Spawn creator Todd McFarlane, began airing on HBO in January.

Even the Clown can feel the emotion of the "Spawn" music

There may be a sequel to "Vampirella," which starred Talisa Soto

VAMPIRELLA UPDATE

Gary Gerani, the writer of the **"Vampirella"** telefilm that aired in October on Showtime, said it "did very, very well" in the ratings, and it's possible another film featuring the character could be made.

The movie, which starred Talisa Soto and Roger Daltrey, will air in television syndication later this year and will eventually be released on home video, Gerani said. He said the syndicated version will be different, editing out language, but also adding scenes not in the Showtime version, including a scene in the concentration pit at Operation: Purge.

Gerani said he was generally happy with "Vampirella," despite its low budget.

"I thought Talisa was interesting as Vampirella," he said. "Everybody was upset about the costume, but I know her facial expressions were interesting and she gave a soulful performance—even with the Puerto Rican accent, which made her more exotic."

Sources report that Vampirella is in the early stages of development in animated form, and it could incorporate elements of the telefilm.

HULK TO SMASH AGAIN

"The Incredible Hulk" animated series has been renewed for a second season by UPN. There will likely be eight new episodes,

although at press time it was unclear if the series would continue to be produced through New World Animation (recently purchased by Fox) or if it would move to Saban Entertainment, which is producing "X-Men" and the upcoming "Silver Surfer."

Sources note that it's possible "The Incredible Hulk" will take a new direction in the second season, possibly teaming the Hulk with She-Hulk in every episode and straying from the military aspects created in the first season. Also, if the show is produced by Saban, it's possible the series will have new voices.

UPN also renewed "Jumanji," but canceled "The Mouse & The Monster" and "Bureau of Alien Detectors."

WHOPPER OF A DEAL

According to *Daily Variety*, Burger King was in negotiations with Warner Bros. on a promotional tie-in with the new **Superman** live-action movie, which will reportedly be titled either "Superman Reborn" or "Superman Lives."

Kevin Smith ("Clerks," "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy") is writing the script, which will be based on the "Death of Superman" comics story. The movie is targeted for a summer 1998 release and will likely begin production next fall. At press time, there was no director or cast linked to the film.

This summer's **"Batman & Robin"** film from Warner Bros. will have a promotional tie-in with Taco Bell. The previous two Batman films had promotions by McDonald's, which has since signed a 10-year deal with Disney.

IT'S TIME FOR 'TIMECOP'

Production on ABC's **"TimeCop"** television series is expected to begin in early March. Mark Verheiden, who wrote the "TimeCop" film, is writing the first episode of the television series and will serve as supervising producer.

TV's "TimeCop" will be based on the Jean-Claude Van Damme flick

"It will be the same setting [as the movie], with the Time Enforcement Commission in the year 2007 and police going back in time to stop other people who have gone back in time for their own purposes," Verheiden said.

"We're going to try to find different takes on how to play with time travel and how going back in time can affect people emotionally."

The lead character of "TimeCop" will be male, but not the Max Walker character played by Jean-Claude Van Damme in the movie. "We'll have someone who doesn't carry as much baggage," Verheiden said, adding that the name of the character had not been finalized.

Details are still sketchy about storylines, but Verheiden said the series will carry over a number of the movie's concepts, including the rocket sled used to travel through time. The sled was designed by Philip Harrison, who is also the production designer on the upcoming "Spawn" live action film. ABC has ordered 13 episodes of the series.

UPCOMING RELEASE DATES

Sony Pictures has altered its release plans for its major movies this summer. **"Men in Black,"** based on the Malibu Comics series and starring Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, has been moved from June 6 to July 2. **"Starship Troopers,"** the big-budget science-fiction film, has been moved from July 2 to Nov. 7.

Other release dates for genre films include the **"Jurassic Park"** sequel "The Lost World" on May 23, **"Mortal Kombat: Annihilation"** on Aug. 1 and "Kull the Conqueror" on Aug. 29.

Also, **"Spawn"** from New Line Cinema and **"Steel"** from Warner Bros. were both tentatively scheduled for August, but, with the recent Time-Warner/Turner merger, sources report that one of them might be pushed back to the fall.

THE BAT-BOX

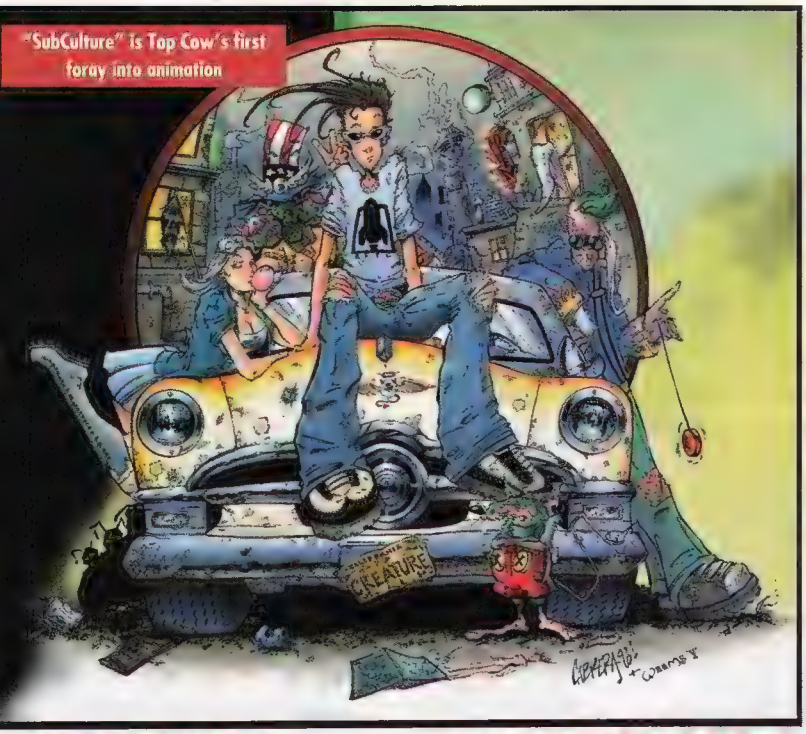
Robin becomes Nightwing on the animated "Batman"

Here's the latest buzz on **"Batman & Robin"**:

Principal photography on the film, which began Sept. 20, wrapped in late January. Trailers were expected by February, and the film's release date is June 20....*Sports Illustrated* swimsuit model **Vendela** is playing Nora Freeze, the disease-stricken wife of Mr. Freeze. For the film, she is using her full name: Vendela Thommessen....The film's biggest set will be the Gotham City Museum. It was filmed on the same stage used for the circus scene in "Batman Forever."...One of the Batman costumes worn by **George Clooney** will have a slight blue contrast to the black areas. Also, as Bruce Wayne, Clooney is not dying his hair, keeping his trademark "salt and pepper" gray....Mr. Freeze will have his own vehicle that includes a freezing gun turret....Arkham Asylum, featured in "Forever," will be a key site in "Batman & Robin."...John Glover will be playing Jason Woodrue, but don't look for the Floronic Man—his comic book alter ego—in the movie....Jeep Swenson, who plays Bane, appeared in "Batman Returns" as one of the members of the Red Triangle Circus Gang.

In TV news, the addition of Dick Grayson as **Nightwing** will be one of the changes for the 21 new episodes of the "Batman" animated series, set to air next fall on the Kids WB! network. Nightwing will be voiced by Loren Lester, who also did the voice of Robin on previous episodes. Kevin Conroy returns to do the voices of Bruce Wayne and Batman.

"Batman" is tentatively scheduled to alternate on weekdays with "Superman" next fall. There will also be a straight-to-video Batman animated film released this summer. The movie will feature Mr. Freeze as the villain and will coincide with the theatrical release of the live-action "Batman & Robin." ■ *RA*



"SubCulture" is Top Cow's first foray into animation

TOP COW'S ANIMATED ANIMAL ATTRACTION

Marc Silvestri's **Top Cow Productions** has several television and movie projects on the verge of being finalized, including the long-awaited live-action version of **Witchblade**. First up, though, is **"SubCulture,"** an animated comedy in development for Fox.

Created by Nathan Cabrera, "SubCulture" is described by Top Cow as "a comedic look at a dysfunctional future dominated by consumer products. Salvation comes in the form of a few rebellious kids, and a band of mutated lab animals engineered from the quest for a better mascara."

Top Cow's Brad Foxhoven said writers from HBO's critically acclaimed "The Larry Sanders Show" will likely be involved with "SubCulture." Thirteen episodes are planned.

A GEENA-RATED FILM

Geena Davis ("Thelma & Louise") will star in and co-produce **"The Sorcerer's Apprentice,"** an animated film that's part of family entertainment company Storyopolis' first-look deal with Warner Bros.

Davis, who will co-produce with her husband, director Renny Harlin, will voice and serve as the model for the female apprentice. The script, to be written by Bill Marsilli ("Jingle"), is based on author and poet Nancy Willard's retelling of the classic fairy tale, as well as Leo and Diane Dillon's artwork.

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Berkeley Breathed, the creator of the "Bloom County" comic strip, is writing the Christmas film "Red Ranger Came Calling," as part of the Storyopolis/Warner deal. The film will be a mix of live-action, animation and computer-generated special effects.

SHORT TAKES

Foreign distribution for the direct-to-video **"Gen13"** animated movie will be by Network Entertainment of Australia....**Lenore Zann**, who does the voice of Rogue on the "X-Men" animated series, had a guest role on the Dec. 20 episode of Fox's "Millennium."...New episodes of **"Poltergeist: The Legacy"** will be shown on Showtime in March....Ron Perlman ("Beauty and the Beast") is among the cast of **"Alien Resurrection,"** now in production in Los Angeles....**"Beavis and Butt-Head Do America"** was a surprise blockbuster, setting a December opening record with $20.5 million in its first week. The animated film, featuring Mike Judge's MTV characters, was approaching the $70-million mark at press time....**"The X-Files"** swept the Golden Globes in January, winning best dramatic series, along with David Duchovny as best actor in a drama and Gillian Anderson as best actress....German actor Ralf Moeller is starring in the live-action **"Conan: The Adventurer"** television series to be syndicated by Keller Entertainment. Veteran *Conan the Barbarian* comic writer Roy Thomas will be a co-producer. Twenty-two episodes will be produced for the first season, set to begin this fall....According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, **Gary Oldham** was in discussions to play Dr. Smith in the upcoming "Lost in Space" movie, based on the 1960s television series....**"Space Jam,"** starring Michael Jordan and Bugs Bunny, will be released on home video on March 11....Disney's animated **"The Hunchback of Notre Dame"** will be released on home video on March 4....Terry Moore is still in talks to bring ***Strangers in Paradise*** to either television or the movies. W

Rob Allstetter likes to bring dates to the Grand Canyon spot where the "Thelma and Louise" climax took place. And just like in the film, cops always follow.

"Men in Black" (left) and "Starship Troopers" have both been bumped back

SPECIAL REPORT

THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK

'Spawn' star Michael Jai White puts body and soul into his work

Be certain of one thing about Michael Jai White's approach to the title role in the upcoming "Spawn" live-action film: He intends on walking the walk and talking the talk of Todd McFarlane's creation.

Defeated, impaled and trapped on an alley fence inside a dark Hollywood Center Studios stage, White's Spawn character can only listen as The Clown, played with fiendish glee by John Leguizamo, rolls off a litany of disgusting nastiness, peppered with impure intentions for Spawn's beloved Wanda.

The crew-produced rain drips down from hoses high above the set, and the water splatters off White's burnt-face makeup, adding harsh insult to Spawn's helpless situation. The Clown, content that his humiliation of Spawn is complete, prances off into the darkness, and Cogliostro, who has been hiding, arrives to pull Spawn off the fence.

"You'll never learn," Cogliostro admonishes Spawn.

Spawn glares at Cog. There's a pause. Then he snarls, "I'm going to kill that a--hole."

Tough talk—and surely one of the movie's more memorable lines. But White is used to playing heavyweight characters, earning good reviews for his turn as the beleaguered boxing champion Mike Tyson in the HBO telefilm "Tyson." Even with the scenery-chewing Leguizamo and the tendency for villains to become the focus in recent comics-to-movies, White seems to be carrying off the challenging title role.

"When Michael Jai White walks around, he becomes Spawn," says director Mark Dippe. "I really think of him as Spawn. But when he takes the costume off, he's another person. It's just a bizarre thing."

Bizarre, but not unintentional. Under face makeup and latex that was often suffocating and confining, White uses his sculpted, stocky frame to help convey the turmoil Spawn endures through the film, a process of discovery, rage and revenge—with lots of tough-guy action.

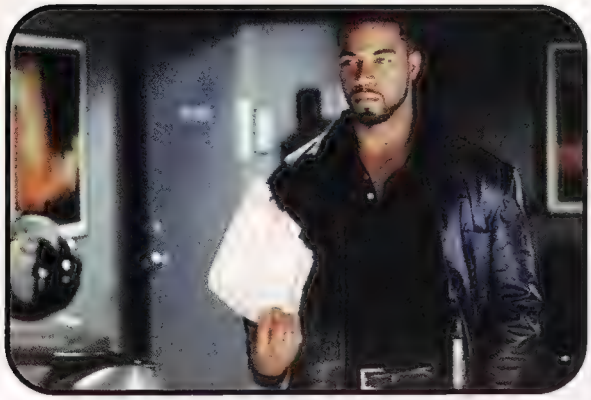
"The acting is physical," says White, relaxing earlier in the day in the makeup trailer after getting his three-piece Spawn burnt face glued on. "The way I walk and express myself physically is unique. I've created kind of a way of movement for Spawn."

White gestures his hands in front of him, trying to describe the movement, but realizes it's something he can't really share.

"You can tell immediately if it's a stunt double or myself," he says. "We just don't move quite the same."

Those physical skills were the first things that McFarlane, an executive producer of the film, noticed about White.

White fights injustice as Spawn (top) and inner demons as Mike Tyson



"When we were looking to cast the guy who was going to be Spawn, what we didn't want was a guy who's Al Simmons here, but as soon as he's in costume [we] bring in a stunt double," says McFarlane. "There's makeup? Bring in a stunt double. We didn't want that at all.

"Physically, Michael has got the body that every man would want. He's big, tough and strong—that 'god' body. He's trained in martial arts, so he moves well. That's what really tipped the scales for him. And [the fact] that he can act—that's really cool.

"Because I was looking at the physical end of it, I was really surprised at his acting ability and how much he was bringing to [the role], given that he's in makeup and latex for five hours at a stretch. Of everyone in the film, he's impressed me the most."

Even with White's physical prowess, he says he's found playing Spawn to be a rugged role. In addition to the demanding makeup and costuming restraints, White encounters situations where he must run, fight and be strapped in a harness.

"They had planned for stunt doubles to take a good deal of work for us—a lot of the physical stuff—but it hasn't really worked out that way," White says.

"Spawn" has also provided an eye-opening re-introduction to comics for White. After director Dippe gave him some *Spawn* comics, White says he was immediately fascinated with the character, whom he likes to say "isn't a cookies-and-cream superhero."

"Comics have come a long, long way," White says. "It's kind of like growing up watching 'Happy Days,' staying away from television for a while and then turning on 'Martin' or 'Roseanne'—it's such a difference.

"I felt [comics] have evolved with the times. The comics are much more interesting nowadays. This hero, Spawn, has a lot more complexity. That's what contemporary society demands. Simple good-guy, bad-guy stuff is real passé. That doesn't come across in our lives.

"To me, 'Spawn' deals with contemporary times. Superman or The Phantom were cool way back in their day, but 'Spawn' reflects more of what society is now. It's more interesting to see the dark hero, the duality of human beings to the core."

White met McFarlane for the first time at the last San Diego Comic Convention. The two became fast friends—"It felt like we've known each other for years," White says—and their affinity for each other is visible when McFarlane visits the set.

"Out of the multitude of people I've met in the last couple of years, Todd has impressed me like few others because of how he can balance his business and personal life," White says. "I don't care what somebody's achieved for themselves—five Oscars or whatever—if you are not a good person, it doesn't mean anything. If you can cultivate a successful family life and have good friends, that's achievement."

White thought he could be a fly on the wall at the McFarlane panels at the convention, but was quickly identified as the man who would play Spawn. "It was my introduction to the comic book world and the Spawn phenomenon," he laughs.

And what will all the die-hard Spawn fans think of the film?

White looks at himself in the mirror and sees Spawn. "Oh, they'll like it," he says, talking the talk. ■ *RA*

White brings both Al Simmons in his pre-Spawn days (top left) and Spawn (top right and above) to life

MANGA SCENE

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION

□ By Carl Gustav Horn

THE HOT MANGA MIXX

'Sailor Moon' headlines 'Mixx Zine,' a mix of the best in manga for men and women

"Sailor Moon" manga is one of four series in *Mixx Zine*

Talk about a good *Mixx*.

It was exciting enough when it was announced in January that *Sailor Moon* manga will finally be released in the U.S. But imagine the surprise when it was learned that "Sailor Moon" will actually be one of four manga serialized in *Mixx Zine*, an ambitious new American manga magazine that will hit general release in May (advance subscribers will get it first in March).

Now the producers of *Mixx* are talking about the three *other* series that will appear in the much-awaited, 200-plus page premiere issue of *Mixx Zine*. Following a broad reader-base strategy, *Mixx* will feature, in total, two stories directed towards male readers, "Ice Blade" and "Parasyte," and two directed towards female readers, the aforementioned "Sailor Moon" and the now-announced "Magic Knight Rayearth."

Yet, if the history of "Sailor Moon" anime fans in the U.S. is any guide, it can be expected that "broad base" will also equal "crossover," as American readers discover the appeal of different manga styles in one comic series. Here's the dope on *Mixx's* three newly-unveiled titles:

Ice Blade

"Ice Blade," whose original Japanese title is *Jiraishin*, is the first male-oriented story in *Mixx*. Written and drawn by Tsutomu Takahashi, it promises an impact in the style of tough street police TV dramas such as "NYPD Blue." "Ice Blade" is what they call Ky, the icy cold super-stud cop who always gets his man in a manner that manages to amaze both his partner Mack and Chief Nader of the Homicide Division. Every story contains a murder, suspects, procedural police work, investigative examination, suspenseful chases and of course, our hero Ky—who never gets down, never gets beaten and, unlike Colombo, never *ever* shows sympathy.

PARASYTE

The buzz on *Mixx*'s second male-oriented title, Hitoshi Iwaaki's "Parasyte" (original Japanese title: *Kiseiju*) is such that *The Hollywood Reporter* notes that "Terminator 2" director James Cameron, known for his support of the anime "Ghost in the Shell," has already optioned the movie rights to the *Parasyte* manga.

"Parasyte" is a visceral journey of modern terror whose ultra-violent and bizarre artwork has overtones of H.R. Giger's designs as well as the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft. It won the 1993 Kodansha Award in Japan for best manga of the year based on the black humor/horror of its story.

The tale is set in modern times, an era filled with murders and atrocities, and a world we all recognize. But we *don't* recognize the truth—that the evil we accept as human is the work of an enemy. Earth has been invaded by infiltrating aliens who have literally burrowed into the brains of millions of ordinary-appearing humans. The hero of "Parasyte," Shin Izumi, who had the dumb "luck" to be wear-

ing a Walkman when his own ear-boring stalker attacked, instead has his right hand taken over by the alien, and now both host and parasite walk together, forming an uneasy balance in a world going violently mad. Iwaaki uses the situation of "Parasyte" for often savagely funny observations about society and personal relationships; and the intensity of the work has made *Mixx* opt to include "Parasyte" in a so-called "PG-13" section of the magazine that can be removed by parents if they so choose.

Magic Knight Rayearth

In addition to *Mixx*'s publication of "Sailor Moon," a welcome surprise is their other female-oriented title, "Magic Knight Rayearth," a manga strip that already has a considerable following among hardcore male and female American fans.

"Magic Knight Rayearth" is the story of what Americans are beginning to realize is the least ordinary thing in manga and anime: "ordinary Japanese schoolgirls." As with "Sailor Moon," "Rayearth" features a group of 14-year-old girls who are only trying to make it all the way through the school day to seventh period, but suddenly find themselves drafted into fighting an otherwordly battle. Umi Ryuzaki, Fuu Hououji and Hikaru Shidou (or "Marine," "Anemone," and "Luce" as they are known in the English-translated anime—*Mixx Zine* is undecided as to which names they will use) are called to the world of Zephyr by the beautiful Princess Emeraude who needs their help to overcome a powerful sorcery.

But saying that the premise of "Rayearth" is similar to that of "Sailor Moon" is off base. "Rayearth" has its own vibe going: unlike "Sailor Moon," whose characters live fairly ordinary lives in-between adventures, the heroines in "Rayearth" have been given the old heave-ho into another world and, unprepared and ignorant, have had to learn to fight quickly. As the name "Magic Knight Rayearth" implies, the girls become both fighters and magic-users. And the series—with its teenagers entering a realm of fantasy where they gradually acquire fighting skills, spells, armor and weapons—is in fact quite similar to the role-playing game "Dungeons and Dragons."

Spicing the mix as well is the fact that "Rayearth" is drawn by CLAMP, a combo of four female artists who broke out of the Osaka *doujinshi* ("fanzine" or "small-press") scene to make it big in the monthly 1.8 million-selling female manga title, *Nakayoshi*. American manga fans have already had the chance to see CLAMP's beautiful artwork and flowing, exploding layout genius in their apocalyptic story *X/1999*, published through

MANGA FOR THE MASSES

'Mixx Zine' aims for the average American

The secret to manga's future success? Marketing.

So says *Mixx Zine* senior editors Ron Scovil Jr. and Stuart Levy, and they mean business. The pair sees a two-part solution to make their magazine mainstream, and sell on the supermarket racks—not just the comics stores.

The first is the "media-mix strategy" used in Japan where manga sales are reinforced with simultaneous anime, merchandising and events. "The principle extends also to other forms of media," says Scovil. "The anime these manga are based on, a lot of people in Hollywood and the music industry are into now." *Mixx Zine* is particularly interested in connecting to the hip-hop scene, which both Scovil and Levy are big fans of, and of course, whose albums dominate the *Billboard* charts these days. Many of the top Japanese manga magazines sport funky, eye-catching experimental covers; *Mixx Zine* will try something similar by having urban artists do interpretations of their manga characters on their cover.

The second part, Levy says, is recognizing the latent, untapped American comics audience; specifically, the idea that American newspapers prove that not only is there a true mass audience here for comics—yes, black-and-white, cheap newsprint comics with diverse stories, just like in Japan. "What's the first part of the paper that most people turn to? The comics. And what do you find there? Serial adventure, historical fantasy, ethnic interest, women's issues [and stuff you] personally like. But the others *you* don't read get their contracts renewed—they've got their faithful audience, too."

There's no doubt that *Mixx Zine* is an extremely ambitious—and risky, venture. However, the same could have been said for the over $1.5 million Manga Entertainment paid to co-produce "Ghost in the Shell," an investment that paid off in critical praise, Hollywood attention and over 400,000 copies sold thus far on video. That investment proved to be a great leap forward for anime in the U.S., but there's no denying that the manga so much anime are based upon has lagged behind here thus far. *Mixx Zine* definitely means to change that. ■ *CGH*

Viz Comics.

So check out *Mixx Zine*, due out in May. It has a little something for everyone. And "little" in this case means a lot. W

Carl Horn is an exploding layout genius in his own apocalyptic story.

COMING TO AMERICA

Here's a list of major upcoming manga releases.

• ***Battle Angel Alita: Angel of Chaos*** (March, Viz Comics)—The seventh reprint volume of the *Alita* series, this 224-page paperback collects the story of Alita's new "operator" Lou, as well as the battling the forces of Barjack.

• ***Blade of the Immortal: Call of the Worm*** (April, Dark Horse Comics, pictured below)—The story of Manji, a master-less samurai who is granted immortality, continues in this three-issue mini-series. His quest to kill 1,000 evil men to regain his mortality rages on in this bloodbath.

• ***Maison Ikkiku: Bedside Manners*** (March, Viz Comics)—This 200-page paperback is the sixth volume of Rumiko Takahashi's romantic comedy series sees the grandmother of college student Yusaka overstay her welcome and throw one last wild party. Look out...

• ***Robotech*** (March, Antarctic Press)—This new ongoing series must see the crew of the SDF-1 learn to come together to fight the Zentraedi who have set their sights on the Earth and its people. ■

MANGA SCENE

PICKS OF THE MONTH

IPPONGI BANG'S AMAZING STRIP

manga

(Antarctic Press, 2 vols., 112 pgs. ea., $10.95 ea., b&w, mature readers)

Ippongi Bang is no hired model promoting Bad Girl comics. No, the horror-film actress, Kawasaki-riding daredevil, rock 'n' roll singer and prodigious writer/artist is the authentic bad girl of manga—and *Ippongi Bang's Amazing Strip* would seem, of all her works published by Antarctic Press, the one closest to her nature.

The Strip chronicles the adventures of T.A.T. Show, a club-hopping band whose every gig seems to interact with phenomena both sexy and supernatural. There's guitarist Timer, who only seems to attract ghosts, angels and time-travelers, but never normal girls; ultra-buff bassist Ralph, who insists that he used to be a woman, which is making Timer increasingly nervous; and lead singer Nami, who still gets calls from her dead first boyfriend and who becomes the target of a serial killer more bizarre than any villain seen in *Preacher*. Not currently running, you can catch up on *Amazing Strip* in its two graphic-novel collections from Antarctic.

Street Fighter II V

anime

(Manga Entertainment, subtitled or dubbed, 3 episode volumes of 90 mins. ea., $19.95/24.95 ea. either version, now available)

The "V" stands for "victory"—and this Japanese animated TV series based on the international smash hit video game "Street Fighter II" is victorious in gaining a strong core of fans.

And that's to the credit of the genius of Capcom, the game's manufacturer. Capcom has been able to take kick-and-punch characters and give them weird, funky international backgrounds, which then can be explored outside the game in manga and anime. Though the "Street Fighter II" anime film had only enough time to check off appearances by each character, the TV series (which is also directed by the acclaimed anime veteran Gisaburo Sugii, known for projects such as "Night on the Galactic Railroad") has 29 episodes of drama, based around a continuous storyline with a globe-trotting journey by the game's original duo and eternal buddies/rivals, Ryu and Ken, at its center. The first volume alone mixes it up in a bar brawl in San Francisco and then a gang fight in Hong Kong, and finally introduces the girl destined to be "the strongest woman in the world," the ever-popular Chun-Li!

Gunsmith Cats Contest

Rally? Minnie-May? Which one is your favorite *Gunsmith Cats* bounty hunter? Maybe you like Becky, Bean Bandit or Misty. Let us know by doing up a drawing of your one favorite 'Cat. Use ink, pencils, paints, gun powder or whatever medium you wish, 'cause the best ones will win these:

Explosive Prizes:

Grand Prize (1): One winner will get a Gunsmith Cats sketch signed by creator Kenichi Sonoda, a copy of the *Gunsmith Cats: Bonnie and Clyde* trade paperback and a copy of *Shades of Gray*, the new series shipping in May!

Second Prize (4): Four winners will each get a sketch signed by Kenichi Sonoda, the *Bonnie and Clyde* trade paperback, and a copy of *Shades of Gray*.

Third Prize (10): Ten winners will each get a *Bonnie and Clyde* trade paperback and a copy of *Shades of Gray*.

This month's contest is sponsored by Dark Horse Comics and we think they're the Joanie to our Chachi.

Catty Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Horse Comics and their immediate families or whoever fixed it so Pittsburgh didn't make the Super Bowl. May your comic collection transform into nothing but Defiant Comics back issues, dillweed. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Gunsmith Cats Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. What's the first thing you think of when you hear the term "Bean Bandit"? Maybe it's just us, but we're thinkin' trouser waffle. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on or about May 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after May 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Gunsmith Cats Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it to: Gunsmith Cats Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 30, 1997.

"Gunsmith Cats" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Wonder Woman

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Diana (known as Princess Diana on Themyscira; her official U.S. civilian name is Diana Prince)
AGE: unknown
HEIGHT: 5' 11"
WEIGHT: 135 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: black
EYE COLOR: blue
FIRST APPEARANCE: (original version) *All Star Comics* #8 in 1941; (modern version) *Wonder Woman* #1 in 1987
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Wonder Woman, JLA*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Cheetah, Ares, Circe, Darkseid, Morgaine Le Fay, Dr. Psycho and Decay

ORIGIN

Throughout time, the souls of women killed before their time by men were collected by Gaea, the Earth mother, and stored in the mystical Cavern of Souls found at the depths of Hades. After centuries of waiting, the souls were restored to full life by the combined will of the goddesses of ancient Greece. Greece was the initial home of this new race of women, the Amazons, but as punishment for allowing Heracles and his men to conquer them, the goddesses sent the women to the island of Themyscira, where they prospered and grew in wisdom and strength, turning the island into a virtual paradise. Except for one problem: Its queen, Hippolyta, was unfulfilled.

When she was still a cavewoman, Hippolyta was pregnant before her untimely death and subsequent resurrection. She pleaded to the gods to still let her have the unborn child, by using the only soul left in the Cavern. Hippolyta was commanded by the gods to form a figure of a baby girl out of clay, and they brought it to life. Hippolyta named the child Diana, in honor of a great warrior who had died to save the island. The child was gifted by the patron goddesses of Themyscira with great strength, speed, flight, wisdom and beauty. As an Amazon, she was also granted immortality.

The idyllic beauty of Themyscira was disturbed once again, this time by Steve Trevor, an American jet pilot who crash-landed on the island. The Amazons, seeing that the world of man had made great strides in weapons of mass destruction, decided that an ambassador from Themyscira should journey to Patriarch's World, as they called it, to act as a teacher of the peaceful ways of the Amazons. To determine who would make the journey, Hippolyta declared that all Amazons would compete for the honor, but at the same time, forbade Diana from taking part.

Concealing her identity, Diana competed in a tournament, easily defeating her Amazon sisters. Despite Hippolyta's protests, Diana donned the specially designed armor, and returned the healed Trevor back to man's world, where she quickly became known as Wonder Woman.

Since her arrival in man's world, Diana has been involved in many adventures, whether it be solo or as a member of the Justice League.

Perhaps the most traumatic event of the heroine's life occurred when her mother, haunted by a vision of Wonder Woman dying in Patriarch's World, called for a new contest to choose a new champion. Hippolyta cited Diana's becoming too ruthless and not doing enough good as the reasons for her decision. As a result of a contest rigged against Diana, Artemis, a warrior from a rival Amazon tribe, was chosen to be the new Wonder Woman.

Diana returned with Artemis to man's world, in order to act as her guide. Artemis was overly headstrong, however, and was killed in a battle with a man-demon known as The White Magician.

Following Artemis' death, Diana—wanting to see how her teachings had affected other areas of the world—relocated from Boston to Gateway City, and took a position at the city's museum. Trouble followed quickly, however, and Diana soon found herself fighting against Darkseid, who was seeking the gods of ancient Greece, who have seemingly disappeared.

Intent on finding the gods at all costs, Darkseid laid siege to Themyscira. The battle against Darkseid ravaged Themyscira, but Diana and the Amazons finally drove the dark lord from the island, at the cost of many Amazonian lives.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since her return to Gateway City, Diana has had to contend with threats of both a mystical and technological nature. First, Morgaine Le Fay captured Diana and several other immortals in an attempt to sap their energies and regain her own waning immortality. However, since Diana had renounced her immortality upon leaving Themyscira, the sorceress apparently disintegrated. Next, a scientist's invention, powered by the imagination of his dead son, created near-perfect replicas of heroes and villains, all intent on battling Diana. Aided by the mysterious Champion, Diana finally defeated the threats.

Lately, Diana has ventured to the Antarctic to aid Cave Carson in thwarting the plans of an ancient race that would have returned the world's continents to their prehistoric global position. Through her adventures, she has realized that she has deep feelings for the enigmatic Champion.

Diana's happiness may be short-lived, however. She has recently been afflicted with an ailment that has caused her to slowly return to the clay from which she was formed. Whether Diana can reverse this condition before she becomes a pile of dust remains to be seen.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Though current *Wonder Woman* writer/artist John Byrne is tight-lipped on WW's future, he finally gave us this semi-vague tease about what's coming up in her title: "I suppose I can tell you that issues #125-#126 of *Wonder Woman* [in July and August] will feature an event at least as significant as the 'death' of Superman—and that subsequent issues will put us on an arc which will culminate with Diana becoming uncontestably the most powerful hero in the DCU."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Wonder Woman* #1 (new series)**—This first issue completely relaunched and revamped Wonder Woman. In a masterpiece by plotter/penciler George Pérez, learn the new origin of Wonder Woman (as well as some cool Greek mythology).
- ***Wonder Woman* #8 (new series)**—Four supporting characters give their individual viewpoints of Wonder Woman and how she's impacted them and the world.
- ***Wonder Woman* #20 (new series)**—"Who Killed Myndi Mayer?" The heroine investigates the bizarre death of her former publicist, and what she discovers is quite unsettling.
- ***Wonder Woman* #94-#95 (new series)**—Diana vs. Cheetah, Poison Ivy and Cheshire. Catfight! Catfight!
- ***Wonder Woman* #113 (new series)**—The first appearance of the new Wonder Girl! Check it out—she can fly, she's tough, and she wears Diana's old wig!
- ***Kingdom Come* #1-#4**—Okay, okay, so it's not a WW book, but this mini-series perfectly captured the character of the older, battle-weary Amazon warrior who still sought to fight for the Amazonian ideals of peace at nearly any cost.

SIMILAR TASTES

If Wonder Woman sounds like your thing, check out these other books with strong female characters and solid characterization: *Leave It to Chance* by James Robinson and Paul Smith; the *Birds of Prey* specials featuring Black Canary and Huntress; and of course, *Strangers in Paradise* by Terry Moore.

And for a more humorous look at a strong female in comics, check out Byrne's run on *The Sensational She-Hulk* from a few years back.

A frequent contributor to Wizard, *Matthew Brady looked high and looked low and finally found his own Wonder Woman. Then he married her.*

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KROME PRODUCTIONS

by Joyce M. Steel

March Mutant Madness

Fleer/SkyBox shows no sign of slowing down this month, despite its parent company, Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in January. However, the company does show signs of hearing the fans' plaintive cries for more affordable sets! This month's *X-Men .99* offers up 50 CGI-enhanced cards for...you guessed it...99 cents! That's right, 99 cents! There's only one chase card, but it's actually one cool-looking tattoo (1:3 packs). The card backs feature brief bios and—thankfully—a resurrected power rating chart for every mutant (seven cards per pack, suggested retail price $.99)!

SIXTH GENERATION

For those who prefer space odysseys to mutant mayhem, once again Fleer/SkyBox has got you covered with its *Star Trek: The Next Generation Episode Collection*. This month, the 108-card *Season Six* set features a three-card summary for each of the season's 26 episodes (78 cards), a nine-card timeline mural, a production credit card and two nine-card foil stamped murals of O'Brien and Q. Chase cards include six foil-embossed cards spotlighting Scotty, Alexander, Lore, Death Howl, Painsticks and that nifty Cloaking Device (1:12); two Holograms, a dual-image flip of Scotty and a full-motion image of that pesky Q (1:180), and two totally new SkyMotion cards (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

SSSMOKIN'!

Speaking of the next generation, Inkworks is eyeballing the young this month with a series based on that silly syndicated CBS Saturday morning cartoon, "The Mask." The 81-card set'll include episode cards along with special Milo (the dog) cards, Mask Pose cards and "Maskisms" cards. Chasing the series are nine Popups (1:2), nine Foilworks "The Mask Does Hollywood" cards (1:17) and four Motionworks lenticular cards (1:35) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.49).

RAZOR'S EDGE

Moving from animation to comic books, Krome Productions follows up its successful *Razor* series with a card set based on Razor's evil sister and bitter enemy, Stryke. *Lethal Strike Chromium Cards* is a 35-card series that showcases Stryke's dubious dalliances with her mentor, crimelord Roman Von Drake, with all original art from London Night Studios and special guest artists. Chase subsets include six NecroChrome, two PhotoChrome and two HoloChrome Photo Cards, all randomly inserted. Buy a box if you can—they're printing them in Chromium too (four Chromium Cards and one HoloChrome Sticker per pack, suggested retail $2.50).

CLASSIC GEN[13]

And WildStorm hauls out its tried-and-true *Gen[13] Chromium* series for a re-release this month—'cept it's on regular stock and boasts a few new add-ons. The new set, called *Gen[13] Classic Trading Cards*, includes all 125 cards from the Chromium release, as well as nine new cards for use with *WildStorms: The Expandable Super-Hero Collectible Card Game* (say that ten times fast, I dare ya) featuring Gen[13]. A new expansion set is due to release for the CCG in April (eight cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.50).

HEEEYYY ABBOTTTTT!

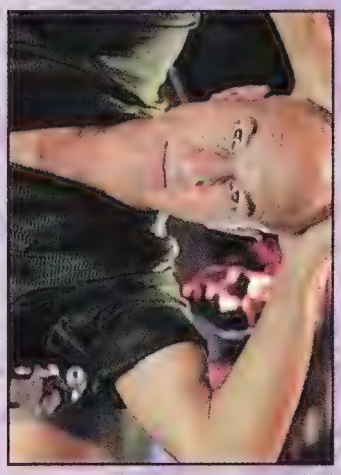
In the comedy cards department, the reigning duo of classic comedy—Abbott and Costello—are starring in their own series from Duocards this month. The 72-card, foil stamped set's packed with rare photos and posters, and it's chased by six Chromium Cards...but the best part is the "HEEEYYY, ABBOTTTTT!" Talking Card, which is sure to annoy the neighbors (seven cards per pack, no established retail price at press time).

LOOKING FOR A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

"Star Wars" fans, never fear. Though we all anticipated the release of *Star Wars 3D* from Topps this past December, the ship date was pushed back to February 10th. It should be on your favorite card shop shelves right about...now. May the force be with you! W

After playing a Jawa in the original "Star Wars," Joyce Steel can now be found screaming "Utinni!"

"Hey, it's only 99 cents a pack! For that you expect decent backgrounds?"
Fleer/SkyBox's *X-Men .99* set



"Nineteen...ugh...twenty! Man, these one-elbow push-ups are murder!" Fleer/SkyBox's *Season Six Star Trek: TNG Episode Collection* card set

"Wow...these European tanning salons are killer. And why are all the women so hairy?"
WildStorm's *Gen[13] Classic Trading Cards*

ToyBiz Presents:

The "Onslaught Survey" Contest

contest

Hey! Wanna win a ton o' great Toy Biz Marvel action figures? Thought so. So fill out the short survey on the facing page. Randomly selected people who participate could win...

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive the complete Toy Biz "Onslaught" prize collection, consisting of all existing Toy Biz figures depicting characters who played a major role in the "Onslaught" storyline. This means you get one figure each (of Toy Biz's choice) depicting Dr. Doom, Human Torch, Invisible Woman, Mr. Fantastic, Thing, Hawkeye, Iron Man, Captain America, Hulk, Dr. Strange, Archangel, Beast, Bishop, Cyclops, Gambit, Iceman, Juggernaut, Magneto, Professor X, Rogue, Storm, Psylocke and Quicksilver! And as if that ain't enough, Toy Biz will customize one Professor X figure into a "Professor X within Onslaught" and provide documentation that this is a one-off custom Toy Biz job created specifically for the winner!

Second Prize (15): Fifteen other survey participants will each receive one randomly selected 5" Toy Biz Marvel action figure and one randomly selected 10" Toy Biz Marvel action figure.

Playful Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Toy Biz and their immediate families. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and fill out the survey. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Onslaught Survey Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on May 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after May 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Onslaught Survey Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Onslaught Survey / Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is April 30, 1997.

"Onslaught" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

1) I am interested in figures that (check one)
__ look exactly as they appear in Marvel Comics
__ just look cool, whether or not they're exact representations

2) I would like to see (check one)
__ more variations on the most popular X-Men figures
__ more brand new X-Men characters

3) Rank these properties in order of which you would most like to see action figures made of (1—most like to see; 6—least like to see)
__ Avengers __ New Warriors
__ Captain America __ Silver Surfer
__ Daredevil __ Thor

4) List any specific Marvel characters you'd like to see made into action figures
_____
_____
_____

5) I buy redecorated action figures (check one)
__ always
__ sometimes
__ never

6) What non-Marvel action figure lines do you collect?
__ Batman __ Star Trek
__ G.I. Joe __ Star Wars
__ Gargoyles __ Starting Lineup
__ Spawn __ Superman
__ Total Justice

7) The best size for action figures to be made in is (check one)
__ 5" __ 6" __ 8" __ 10" __ 12"

8) Which Marvel action figure lines do you collect?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are February's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z. ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Once again in the number one position, *Witchblade* continues to choke the change out of all you fanboys with a fetish for tough chicks with long, stiff, pointy swords. Golly, what would Freud say about this? We don't know, and quite frankly we don't want to; it would probably ruin our whole perception of manhood. What we *do* know is that this issue is one rare commodity. Heck, you'd have better luck finding a date with the opposite sex than finding this issue. No...wait, we forgot who we were talking to. You'd actually have more luck finding an issue of this book than getting a date with a member of the opposite sex. Sorry for any false hopes.

2. DARKCHYLDE #1

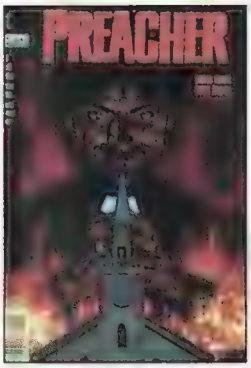
WRITER: Randy Queen ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

Okay, the plot goes something like this: Ariel Chylde is the shy new kid in school with an abusive father and a secret past. No, this isn't a bad ABC After-school Special, it's Maximum Press' *Darkchylde*. Oh, did we mention she's also a hot babe who turns out to be a demon queen from Hell? Big hairy deal—we've all met girls who seem like that, right? Well, the difference between the girls we've known and Ariel Chlyde is that she really *is* a demon queen from Hell. And speaking of queens, did you know that Randy Queen is the artist and writer of this hot issue? You didn't? Well, consider yourself officially informed.

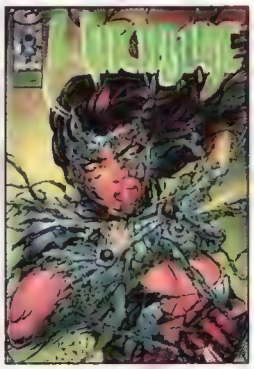
3. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

What do you get when you take a foul-mouthed preacher, a gun-totin' mama, an Irish punk vampire and the spirit of John Wayne and put them all together? You get a cool mag called *Preacher* (and possibly a real cheesy late-night cable movie). Hey, if this combo isn't good enough to grease your gears, then we'll also throw in lotsa blood, body parts and the sick humor of Garth Ennis. But wait...there's more! At no extra cost to you, you'll also get the Saint of Killers and a guy with a sphincter-like face. Now, how much would you have to pay for all this? Don't ask us. Ask that fat, greasy geek that owns the comic store down the street.



NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. WITCHBLADE #2

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

What can we say? A Top Ten without Witchblade is like a zit without pus. Which reminds us, don't you think having the Witchblade under your skin would leave unsightly embarrassing blemishes? Sara Pezzini could be a dermatologist's dream. This is one patient that would need many costly visits. Heck, she could probably fund a whole HMO. And on top of that, she's not a teen with a bad acne condition. Which brings us to the fact that there must be a whole lotta teens (probably with bad acne conditions) buying up this issue, 'cuz it's mega-rare.

NUMBER FIVE

5. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Protex? Surely there must be a better name for a heavyweight JLA villain than Protex. Any villain with a name that sounds like a sanitary napkin is doomed to fail. Especially if you're fighting the likes of Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, Flash, Aquaman and the Martian Manhunter. That's right, the original JLA line-up is back. Not only are they large and in charge, but the new *JLA* writer is that spooky guy Grant Morrison. YIKES! So when it's that time of the month to pick up the latest mags, you might wanna bring some extra coin so that you can purchase this little gem.

6. HITMAN #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

Yee-haw, pardnuh! Hitman's back in the Top Ten shootin' up meta-humans and cheatin' at poker. Hey, doesn't this comic kinda remind you of one those old Westerns with all their rootin', tootin' shoot-'em-up action? Well, maybe that's because Garth Ennis also writes *Preacher*, another bullet-riddled Western-themed mag in the Top Ten. Heck, you can almost smell the gunpowder and horse manure (waitaminnit…there's no horses in this issue). So, for the best read north of the Rio Grande, check it out. All it's missing is that fat-ass Kenny Rogers singing "The Gambler."

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #1

WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTISTS: Brent Anderson & Will Blyberg

If you loved the first series, the second's sure to turn your crank. Once again, Kurt Busiek sets out to give you the perspective of the average citizen of Astro City. Sure, you still get to see the Samaritan, the First Family and Jack-in-the-Box in funky big-time comic battles, but you also get Busiek supplying the unique point of view of those who observe the action and have no power to control it. Throw in cover art by Alex Ross and you got yourself one bonafide collector's item, making it more popular than the Macarena at a cheesy dance club.

8. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

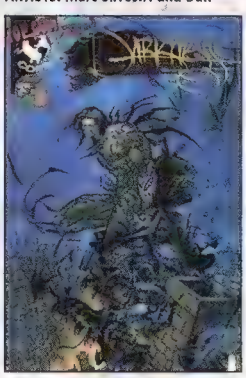
WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

The *FF* is once again one of Marvel's best-selling titles, and it's about friggin' time. Let's face it, the FF haven't been da bomb since John Byrne's run on the title. This, of course, is in no small part due to the efforts of Jim Lee and Brandon Choi, who have brought some of the prestige back to this powerful gang of four. And speaking of gangs, did you know that Ben Grimm (a.k.a. the Thing) was once a member of the Yancy Street Gang? Of course, back then he was known as the OG Thang.

NUMBER EIGHT

9. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt



NUMBER NINE

Whaddaya do if you turn 21 and are granted the most awesome power this side of the Witchblade? If you're Jackie Estacado, hitman for the Franchetti crime family, you open up a whole can of whup-ass on the goons who want to take it away from you—and then you take down the don of the opposing Mafia family. With that Irish rabble-rouser Garth Ennis (*Preacher*, *Hitman*) scripting his usual ultraviolent and darkly humorous mayhem, and Marc Silvestri finally penciling a regular series again, this one's a no-brainer from Top Cow.

10. KINGDOM COME #1

WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTIST: Alex Ross

Hey, did you know that when Elvis was a young fanboy, his favorite superhero was Captain Marvel Jr.? It's true, and it's been speculated that Elvis' big-collar jumpsuits with the short capes were inspired by that Fawcett character. Well, in this highly acclaimed mini-series, Alex Ross brings this fashion faux pas full circle by giving us the future Captain Marvel Jr. He's got Elvis' sideburns and a neckline plunge to the Marvel's navel. It turns out the King of Rock 'n' Roll was also a comic geek. And here we thought he was normal.

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

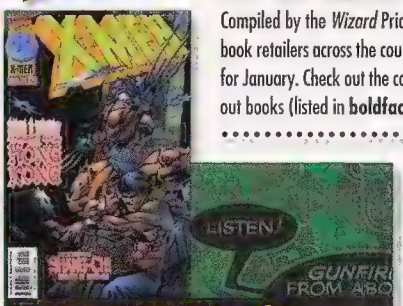
THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. SUPERGIRL #1 DC
12. THE X-FILES #1 TOPPS
13. PREACHER #2 DC / VERTIGO
14. ONSLAUGHT: MARVEL UNIVERSE #1 MARVE
15. IRON MAN #1 MARVEL
16. WITCHBLADE #10 TOP COW
17. WOLVERINE #100 MARVEL
18. CAPTAIN AMERICA #1 MARVEL
19. DV8 #1 IMAGE
20. DAWN #1 SIRIUS

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of JANUARY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for January. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).



1. **X-Men #62 (Marvel)**
2. Uncanny X-Men #342 (Marvel)
3. **Fantastic Four #5 (Marvel)**
4. Spawn #58 (Image)
5. Wolverine #111 (Marvel)
6. **Wolverine/Witchblade (Image)**
7. Iron Man #5 (Marvel)
8. **Elektra/Witchblade (Marvel)**
9. **Curse of the Spawn #5 (Image)**
10. Generation X #25 (Marvel)
11. Avengers #5 (Marvel)
12. Captain America #5 (Marvel)
13. X-Man #25 (Marvel)
14. X-Force #64 (Marvel)
15. X-Men Unlimited #14 (Marvel)
16. X-Factor #132 (Marvel)
17. Cable #41 (Marvel)
18. Excalibur #107 (Marvel)
19. **Gen[13] Bootleg #3 (Image)**
20. **Amazing Spider-Man #421 (Marvel)**
21. **JLA #3 (DC)**
22. **Elektra/Cyblade (Image)**
23. Peter Parker, Spider-Man #78 (Marvel)
24. Incredible Hulk #451 (Marvel)
25. **Deadpool #3 (Marvel)**
26. **Incredible Hulk/Pitt (Marvel)**
27. Spectacular Spider-Man #244 (Marvel)
28. **Silver Surfer/Weapon Zero (Marvel)**
29. Sensational Spider-Man #14 (Marvel)
30. The X-Files #26 (Topps)
31. Batman #540 (DC)
32. **Daredevil/Batman (Marvel)**
33. Sabretooth & Mystique #4 (Marvel)
34. Domino #3 (Marvel)
35. Detective Comics #707 (DC)
36. Supergirl #7 (DC)
37. WildC.A.T.s #34 (Image)
38. Superman #121 (DC)
39. Hellshock #1 (Image)
40. Action Comics #731 (DC)
41. Peter Parker, Spider-Man '97 (Marvel)
42. Superman: The Man of Steel #65 (DC)
43. Adventures of Superman #544 (DC)
44. **Star Wars: B. Fett—T. E. of Destruction (D.H.)**
45. DV8 #4 (Image)
46. Elektra #5 (Marvel)
47. **Batman: The Long Halloween #4 (DC)**
48. Spider-Man: Hobgoblin Lives! #3 (Marvel)
49. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #91 (DC)
50. **S. Wars: A New Hope—Spec. Edition #1 (D.H.)**
51. Preacher #23 (DC)
52. Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #8 (DC)
53. **Chastity: Theatre of Pain #1 (Chaos!)**
54. **Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—G.A.S. #4 (D.H.)**
55. Nightwing #6 (DC)
56. Green Lantern #84 (DC)
57. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #60 (DC)
58. The X-Files Season One #7 (Topps)
59. **K. Busiek's Astro City (Vol. 2) #6 (Image)**
60. Robin #39 (DC)
61. Cyberforce #30 (Image)
62. The Flash #123 (DC)
63. Catwoman #43 (DC)
64. Prophet/Cable #1 (Maximum)
65. Venom: On Trial #1 (Marvel)
66. Batman: Masque #1 (DC)
67. **S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—W. Princess #3 (D.H.)**
68. Thrillkiller #3 (DC)
69. Weapon Zero #10 (Image)
70. Darkchylde/Glory (Maximum)
71. Superman/W. Woman: W. Gods Destroy #4 (DC)
72. Wonder Woman #119 (DC)
73. Silver Surfer #126 (Marvel)
74. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #19 (Marvel)
75. Imperial Guard #3 (Marvel)
76. Shi: Rekishi #1 (Crusade)
77. Spider-Man Team-Up #6 (Marvel)
78. **Jack Kirby's Fourth World #1 (DC)**
79. Code of Honor #2 (Marvel)
80. Journey into Mystery #507 (Marvel)
81. Mars Attacks The Image Universe #2 (Image)
82. The Dreaming #10 (DC)
83. WetWorks #25 (Image)
84. Daredevil #362 (Marvel)
85. Teen Titans #6 (DC)
86. The Maxx #28 (Image)
87. Savage Dragon #35 (Image)
88. The Books of Faerie #1 (DC)
89. Superboy #37 (DC)
90. Hitman #12 (DC)
91. Impulse #23 (DC)
92. Aquaman #30 (DC)
93. Prof. Xavier and the X-Men #17 (Marvel)
94. **Star Trek: Voyager #5 (Marvel)**
95. The Crow: Waking Nightmares #1 (K. Sink Press)
96. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #5 (Marvel)**
97. Evil Ernie vs. The Movie Monsters #1 (Chaos!)
98. **Star Trek Unlimited #3 (Marvel)**
99. **Star Trek: Early Voyages #2 (Marvel)**
100. **Heartland #1 (DC)**

AT THE TOP:

Marvel's Top 20 stranglehold only featured a few noteworthy entries this month. *X-Men* switched places with *UXM* as #1 again, thanks to its debut of new, getting-very-hot artist Carlos Pacheco. Doctor Doom gave *FF* a "shot" in its sales arm, causing the "Heroes Reborn" book to leap over both *Spawn* and *Wolverine* (which only issue #1 was able to do beforehand). Sales-wise, Witchblade is almost as strong a crossover carrier as Wolverine, proven by the "Devil's Reign" installment *Elektra/Witchblade* coming in right under the expected powerhouse *Wolverine/Witchblade* (which smartly teamed Marvel and Top Cow's top-selling heroes). As for non-Marvel hits, *Curse*, the even-darker-than-*Spawn* title, is still staying strong, *Gen[13] Bootleg* is doing well as the unofficial occasional sub book for *Gen[13]*, and *Amazing Spider-Man*, with its solid Steve Skroce art, has been kicking market butt—ulp, that's another Marvel book.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Whatever DC's paying Morrison and Porter, it's not enough—*JLA* was DC's biggest January seller, and hit its highest mark yet. Will this terrific team title break into X-territory? *Deadpool*'s becoming much more than a sleeper; this maniacal merc has enough fans to beat Batman, Superman and a few Spiderbooks. Need to boost your character's orders? Try a big crossover. Elektra, who had her best numbers yet with her Witchblade pairing, returned the favor to Top Cow's Cyblade, as Silver Surfer and Weapon Zero helped each other out tremendously (this book's being the "Reign" conclusion gave it an order push, too). Marvel released two crossovers we've all been waiting for—*Hulk/Pitt* and *Daredevil/Batman*—and they both listed extremely well, especially for $5.99 books. Dark Horse's *Star Wars* books are still flying high, fronted this month by a book starring the ever-popular Boba Fett and a brand-new adaptation of the first film. DC's holiday-oriented *The Long Halloween* maxi-series has been sneaking up to *Batman* and *Detective* levels, despite its $2.95 price—probably due to Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale's presenting solid stories and major Bat-villains.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Chaos!'s loyal fans gave Chastity, the company's totally new character, totally fine orders. More and more readers are moving into *Astro City*, as shown by its enormous 19-point leap this month. Two of DC's risks paid off: *Fourth World*, yet another New Gods relaunch (with fan-favorite John Byrne at the helm), and *Heartland* (the $4.95 one-shot by *Preacher* creators Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon) both scored well, while Marvel's *Trek* titles hung in there.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**

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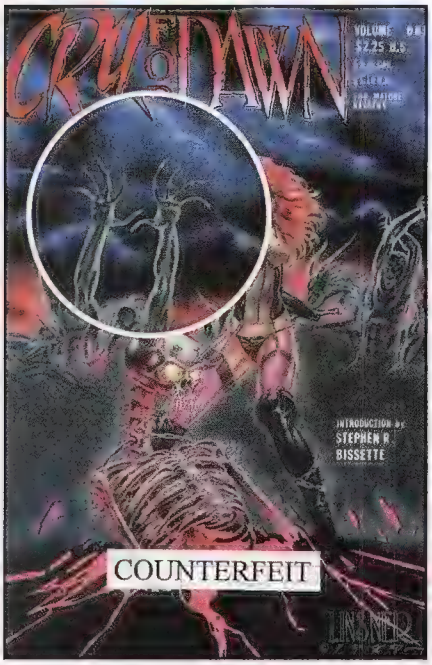
BAIR

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by Jon Warren and the *Wizard staff*

A DAWN TO AVOID



A bumpy sky indicates a bogus *Cry for Dawn* #1

Counterfeit alert! A number of retailers have warned us about counterfeit copies of *Cry for Dawn* #1 showing up at recent conventions. The bogus copies look genuine, too; the only way to tell if one is a fake is that the sky in the picture at the top of the comic's cover is "bumpy" and not smooth, as on the real thing. Buy only from reputable dealers who guarantee their merchandise, and be sure to examine books carefully before paying.

New Superman Controversy

Controversy is already raging over the Internet and within fan ranks about DC's announced revamping of Superman. Most of the anger seems aimed at the new costume (which is actually a containment suit) and logo—but readers are almost always adverse to major changes in their favorite characters. DC did a splendid job of getting publicity for the event (something it didn't do for the wedding issue), and anticipation for the issues is extremely high, giving the Superman titles a badly needed boost. Retailers tell us they are still hedging their bets a little, though, and not ordering nearly as much as they did of the "Death of Superman" issues, so look for this set of books to be a little harder to get a hold of.

Two Sleepers in Darkness

Demand for the *Cyblade/Shi Special* is going up in a hurry, thanks to the fact many fans (and retailers!) are just now remembering that the first appearance of Witchblade is in this book. "Even though the currently low price may reflect the over-ordering of this book, it should edge its way past $10 before too long," said Dash Hobbeheydar and Mark Laskowski of And Then it Rained Comics in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Hobbeheydar and Laskowski also remind us that *Witchblade* #10 is returning the debut favor, being the first issue to feature The Darkness. Prices for this issue are already on the rise, thanks to great word-of-mouth.

And speaking of which, *The Darkness* regular series launched with the same enthusiasm that met *Witchblade* #10, and so far, the excitement just seems to be growing. Top Cow has another hit on its hands with this book, thanks to the talents of Garth Ennis and Marc Silvestri. Retailers tell us this one is moving up even faster than *Witchblade* did!

Do Paperbacks Hurt Value?

Pat H. Mooney, of Houston, Texas, wants to know if trade paperback reprints will hurt the value of his original books. Lots of fans wonder about this, and the answer is: No. According to our records, prices of hot books usually remain stable when a TPB reprint appears and very often go up, thanks to exposure to new readers who then want the originals, increasing demand.

It's Miller Time!

There's a bunch of younger Frank Miller fans who were blown away when they had the chance to read *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* in its recent reprints celebrating the book's 10th anniversary. Consequently, all of Miller's work is hot right now. If you liked *Dark Knight*, there's plenty more of Miller's work out there that's just as enjoyable. Check out his two runs on *Daredevil* (#158-#191, #227-#233) and his "Batman:

***Cyblade/Shi* contains Witchblade's (right) first appearance**

***Dark Knight*'s re-release has sparked interest in other books done by Frank Miller**

Year One" tale (*Batman* #404-#407), much of which can be found in trade paperback form at your local comic book shops.

Books on the Rise

Mainstream books that look to be on the way up: *Witchblade/Wolverine* (retailers report it has the best sales of all the "Devil's Reign" books, thanks to its teaming of two of comics' most popular characters); *Batman vs. Aliens* (Wrightson art is always popular and this book should do well, especially in the footsteps of 1995's *Superman vs. Aliens*); *Troublemakers* (yeah, it's another teen team, but done with style and wit; Acclaim titles are gaining in popularity every month and this could be a sleeper).

Independent comics remain strong. Especially hot are *Snowman*, *Creed*, *Poison Elves*, *Ash*, *Oh My Goddess!*, *Razor* and *THB*. Moving up fast are newcomers *Reality Check*, *Fang* and *22 Brides*. Even in an uncertain market, independents still continue to appear regularly, and who knows what the next hot collectible will be? W

In an uncertain market, Jon Warren continues to pop up regularly.

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

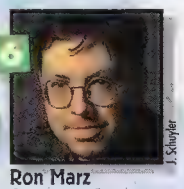
1 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

2 **Mark Waid**
Flash, X-O Manowar

3 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

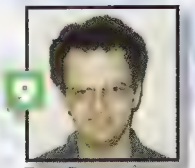
4 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman

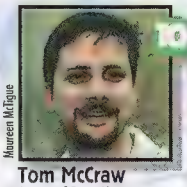
5 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Untold Tales of Spidey


6 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern, Superboy

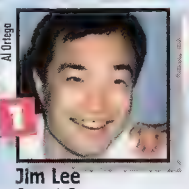
7 **Karl Kesel**
Daredevil

8 **Chuck Dixon**
Robin, Green Arrow


9 **Tom Peyer**
Legion of Super-Heroes


10 **Tom McCraw**
Legion of Super-Heroes

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

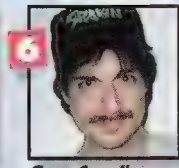

1 **Jim Lee**
Fantastic Four

2 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

3 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen13

4 **Alex Ross**
Kingdom Come

5 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men


6 **Greg Capullo**
Spawn

7 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

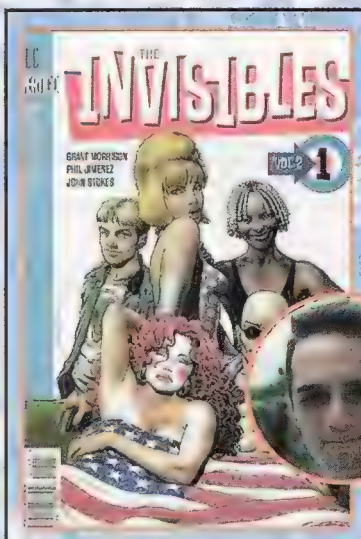
8 **Chris Bachalo**
Generation X

9 **Adam Kubert**
Incredible Hulk

10 **Howard Porter**
JLA

***Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**



Wizard's Up & Coming Creator

PHIL JIMENEZ

With a résumé including *Team Titans*, *Guy Gardner* and *Tempest*, Jimenez's art—currently seen in Vertigo's *The Invisibles*—has three standout aspects: incredible detail, breathtaking backgrounds and excellent use of body language and action. Reminiscent of the meticulous art style that George Pérez made popular in the '80s, Jimenez has the ability to pack more story per page by fitting several panels in a page. Plus, his solid figures and lines are a change of pace for a surreal Vertigo title like *The Invisibles*. *Tempest* editor Eddie Berganza says, "He really cares about every project, and believes in its characters. He also cares about his readers; he won't do a splash page just for a splash page—he likes to give the reader more story, and more shots. He can convey emotions well, with more than just gritted teeth." As for the Pérez comparisons, he adds, "He's now developing a different style, with a more realistic approach." ■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

survey: issue 68

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog-ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at?
If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide.
(Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers.
You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

let your voice be heard

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We need your help. Y'see, the only way to keep improving the WIZARD price guide is to keep in touch with the thousands of comic book fans that make this industry what it is. So, we need you to take a couple of minutes and fill out the survey on the left and mail this page to us. And heck, by helping us make a better mag, you'll *get* a better mag! (See? It all works out in the end.) Oh, and feel free to photocopy this page if you don't feel like destroying this issue.

WHO ARE YOU?

Name (please print)

Address

City State

Zip Age

e-mail address (if you got one)

MAIL SURVEY TO:

Jon R. Warren
c/o WIZARD P.G. Surveys
2401 Broad St.
Chattanooga, TN 37408
e-mail: JonRWarren@aol.com

WIZARD®
#69
Wolverine & Ka-Zar Cover by Andy Kubert!
Or get the Dark Claw cover!
FREE Superman Holochrome Card!
Savage Dragon #½!

BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Hector Hammond welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Do you have what it takes to be considered what the proud Romans called Comicus Geekus Rex? Well, now is the time to find out. This month, we'll rate the knowledge locked in your gray matter against the rejected names for the fourth installment in the series of Bat-flicks, eventually called "Batman & Robin." Ready?

Score	Rank
0-4	"Hey, Tim Burton has nothing to do with this one. It might be only kinda crappy. And Robin."
5-14	"Even though she's fat and stuff, we've got Alicia Silverstone in spandex running across rooftops. And Robin."
15-19	"We've jammed so many characters into this flick your brain's gonna shoot outta your head like a freakin' rocket. And Robin."
20	"Ass. And Robin."

1. When did the Black Knight first meet the super-tough X-Men villain Exodus?
A) back when BK was part of that God-awful Ultra-Force in that God-awful Ultraverse
B) Exodus, then calling himself "Archway," was part of the original Masters of Evil.
C) during the Crusades
D) In a bathhouse in the village. He'd recognize that birthmark anywhere.

2. Where did Gen[13] recently meet Spider-Man?
A) at a rock concert
B) in a seminar at NYU
C) the moon
D) They bumped into each other while waiting outside a comic store for it to open, to pick up the newest issues of "Heroes Rebo…nah, this is too unbelievable. The right answer is "A."

3. Spawn and Terry Fitzgerald have recently teamed up to expose and take down this shady character:
A) Tony Twist
B) Chapel
C) Jason Wynn
D) Gareb Shamus

4. Where did Barry Allen keep his costume when he was not the Flash?
A) In a pocket dimension that he could enter only by vibrating at the right frequency.
B) It was shrunk and placed in a ring on his finger; once the ring was opened, the costume would enlarge.
C) It was made out of a two-dimensional fabric that could be folded and put in his wallet.
D) He always left it at home. Hey, he was the fastest man alive; he didn't need to carry it with him.

5. What's the name of the spacecraft Reed Richards designed in Jim Lee's version of the Fantastic Four?
A) *Excelsior*
B) *Atlantis*
C) *Challenger*
D) *Carl*

6. What bit of irony are a few members of the vampire-killing, werewolf-exterminating team WetWorks aware of, concerning their devious benefactor, Armand Waering?
A) He's an alien.
B) He's a werewolf.
C) He's a vampire.
D) He's French.

7. Who was Superman's best man when he got married?
A) Perry White
B) Bruce Wayne
C) Jimmy Olsen
D) Hal Jordan's corpse

8. Which ex-Avenger was also a member of the X-Men's starfaring buddies, the Starjammers?
A) Binary
B) Yellowjacket
C) Wonder Man
D) Quasar

9. Remember "Maximum Clonage"? (A moment of silence as we all curse those who thought of that ass-backwards idea.) Well, who wasn't a clone of Peter Parker in that Spider-debacle?
A) Ben Reilly
B) The Jackal
C) Kaine
D) Spidercide

10. Hey, who killed Batman's little buddy, Jason Todd, the second Robin?
A) Two-Face
B) Bane
C) The Joker
D) Ra's al Ghul

11. What's the catchy catch phrase of the Borg, the devious cyborg nemeses of the Federation on "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?
A) "Be one with the Borg."
B) "Serve the Borg."
C) "You will be assimilated…resistance is futile."
D) "Grab your ankles and submit to the Borg."

12. During her "honeymoon adventure" with Clark, Lois Lane had an item in which microfilm was hidden. What was this item?
A) a knife
B) a camera
C) a shoe
D) a "massager"

14. On Vampirella's home planet of Drakulon, what's unique about the river systems that once existed there?
A) The waters were sentient.
B) The rivers defied gravity by sometimes flowing through the air itself.
C) The rivers were made of blood instead of water.
D) They had corn and peanuts in them. (*Wizard* tip #163: Don't drink the water on Drakulon.)

15. How did Aquaman lose his hand?
A) It was eaten off by a school of piranha.
B) Black Manta took it in battle as a trophy.
C) A Great White shark tricked Aquadude into thinking he was going to help him, but then attacked him and scarfed his hand.
D) Ocean Master cut it off in battle.

16. What does the father of Chance Falconer (of *Leave it to Chance*) do for a living?
A) He's a famous test pilot.
B) He's an overworked business executive.
C) He's the sorcerer protector of the planet.
D) He's the guy that puts them li'l plastic tip thingies on the ends of shoelaces.

17. Who was responsible for the disappearance and apparent deaths of Reed Richards and his arch-enemy Dr. Doom a few years back?
A) Nathaniel Richards
B) Hyperstorm
C) Annihilus
D) Onslaught

18. What kind of trained prehistoric animal does Ka-Zar pal around with and what's its name?
A) Devil Dinosaur, the Tyrannosaurus Rex
B) Zabu, the saber-tooth tiger
C) Sauron, the pterodactyl
D) Dave, the flatulent Spider-Pony (Making his second "CBIQ" appearance!)

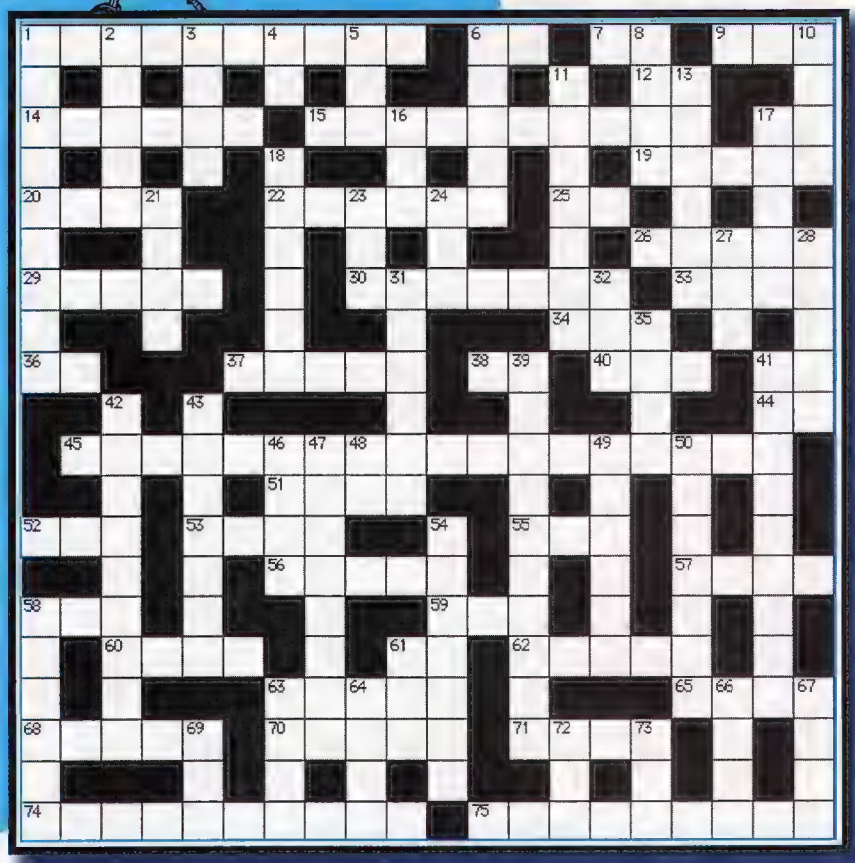
19. Just what in the hell was Bruce Banner doing when he became the irradiated behemoth, the Hulk? (pre-"Heroes Reborn," of course.)
A) He was saving teenage punk Rick Jones from the gamma bomb.
B) He was using gamma rays on himself in an experiment to cure himself of radiation poisoning.
C) After being launched into space, his spacecraft was bombarded by gamma radiation.
D) He was using Lois' massager from "CBIQ" question #12.

20. Who did X-Factor recently discover to somehow still be alive?
A) Factor Three
B) Red Raven
C) Stryfe
D) Jamie Madrox, which just shows that WAAAY too many comic writers today are relying on the shock-value of tearing down the good of Marvel. You know, "Spidey's a clone!" or "Oooo…Tony Stark is crazy!" or "Look, you thought I was dead, but I'm all better now!" Sheesh. Our kingdom for some decent comic writers.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
'Nuff yakkin'.
The answers are on page 206.



1. feral X-Factor member
6. Ant-Man and She-Hulk's ex-team
7. New Gods' harbinger of death; initials
9. slippery Daredevil villain
12. Lion and Scarecrow's Caliber comic
14. Eternal Ike Harris
15. Velocity and Impact's team
17. Larsen's finned 'n' fierce cop; init.
19. Batwoman; _____ Kane
20. Sgt. Rock led this company
22. Kirk Langstrom
25. Superman's fishy ex-girlfriend; init.
26. Queen of Gwendor
29. she was Colossus' sister
30. fast-flying Thunderbolts member
33. Human Torch sidekick
34. subject of Jesse and Tulip's quest
36. Betty Brant's dead husband; init.
37. head of original Doom Patrol
38. Jack Daniels is an agent for this
40. 2099 character, ____ Prophet
41. current Spider-artist; init.
44. dead Spider-villain; init.
45. runs Springfield's Kwik-E-Mart
51. Tim Drake's predecessor
52. "Raiders of the Lost ___"
53. O'Barr's dark revenge seeker
55. Arsenal's first name
56. Doc Magnus' _____ Men
57. old Marvel fan club
58. mysterious, manipulative WildC.A.T.
59. new Kevin Smith film "Chasing ___"
60. *Preacher* sheriff
61. Cloak's first name
62. Binary's first name
63. "Star Trek" Academy rank
65. Alison Blaire's nickname
68. Dark Claw foe
70. Ann O'Brien's evil sister
71. furry "Return of the Jedi" creature
74. Image's UN-sanctioned team
75. Adhesive X-inventing "Citizen"

1. recently lost his baby and "brother"
2. Jim Lee's powerful, armored hero
3. Thunderbolts are really Masters of _____
4. *Superman: The Man __ Steel*
5. Buzz Lightyear movie, "____ Story"
6. First Family name
8. _____ *'n' Roll Comics*
10. Death or Phantom
11. describes Sgt. Fury's commandos
13. Savant's sister
16. Harras or Kane
17. kicked major Kree butt
18. annoying DC teleporter, _____ Bug
21. Frost Giant
23. Marvel war comic, *The* ____
24. group of comic book stories
27. once-popular milk cap
28. Lady Rawhide's black-garbed buddy
31. "It's the signal, Master Bruce."
32. Quasar's dead mentor
35. will play "G.I. Jane"
39. Big Bear's vehicle
41. Martian Manhunter
42. Ghost and Hellboy's comic company
43. blond Stranger in Paradise
46. ex-JLAer and current Titan
47. "Sweet Christmas!"
48. question-crazy Bat-foe's first name
49. *Planet of the Apes* astronaut
50. Image booted him out
54. Backlash
58. standard superhero costume feature
61. William Shatner's ____ *Wars*
63. Image sisterhood
64. Weapon Discus used
66. where Wile E. Coyote shops
67. Hour of "change" for DC
69. Hydra's technical branch
72. James Rhodes, ____ Machine
73. letterer Lopez or Barbie's boytoy

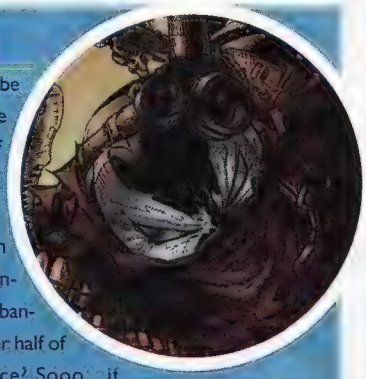
TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE

Wouldn't those giant fangs give Wolvie just the worst chapped lips? Healing factor or no, this li'l noseless fella would need a stick of Chapstick the size of the Juggernaut's leg to clear that up. And once you find a lip balm that big, you can take whoever thought of removing the adamantium from Wolvie's bones and claws and beat 'em about the head and shoulders. C'mon, people, give us back the shiny-boned and glinty-clawed Wolvie with full nasal capabilities. And while you're at it, teach him how to sew. This new "savage" ripped-outfit look is wearing mighty thin.

2) SPAWN



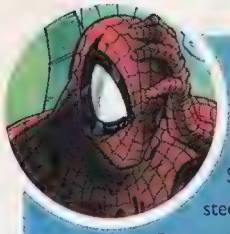
This could very possibly be the dumbest thing we've ever seen. Let's see if we've got this straight: In order to be all secretive and stuff, Spawn, in full chain-rattling, green-glowing regalia, wears a bandanna covering the lower half of his already-masked face? Sooo...if Spawn, minus bandanna, were called into a superhero lineup along with say, oh...I don't know, Lockjaw, Modok and the Newsboy Legion, anybody who had seen Spawn disguised with his spiffy-keen bandanna would be hard-pressed to pick him outta the lineup? Whatever.

3) FAIRCHILD

It all makes sense...curiously orange hair...gravity-defying body...wrinkly chin... Fairchild is a Skrull! We knew there was no way a babe could be as hot as Gen13's Caitlin Fairchild and not be an alien, an android or have made a pact with Satan. Furthermore, we knew...what's that? What d'ya mean, Fairchild is just a comic book drawing meant to spark the blazing hormones that, much like Bruce Banner's raging alter ego, lie buried deep within all frustrated comic fans? You mean...you mean she's not, y'know, real? No? Man, we ain't never gonna score.

4) DARK CLAW

Anybody remember that mildly adult comic book *Faust*? No? Oh, it was a hoot! Chock full of mindless sex, rampant drug abuse and over-the-top violence that'd make Garth Ennis flinch. Anyhoo, whoever designed Dark Claw's costume sure remembers that title, cause the Amalgam hero's outfit is exactly what Faust's zoot-suit looked like. Just mix around the colors a bit (Faust was mostly dark blue with a red mask and cape and whatnot), and BAMMO!, you'd have Dark Faust. Or Faust Claw. Whatever you'd like.



5) SPIDER-MAN

"Spider-sense…perky!" Well, at least Marvel is trying. After years of turning Spidey into something he's not, they're steering back into the core of the character. Gone are his back-to-life parents, MJ's pregnancy, his grim 'n' gritty attitude and that horrific Spider-clone abomination. The newer Spidey stories are getting much, much better. They've got Spidey fighting some cool supervillains (Hey…not a hide nor hair of Carnage in over two months!), he's back in a school setting and he's upbeat and even cracking jokes!

6) MAGNETO

Ewwww…10 bucks one of the reasons Magne…um, we mean Joseph hasn't gotten too far with Rogue is 'cause of that disgustin' chewin' tobaccy habit. But we can't be too upset with Maggy here. If we had to choose one way for the li'l magnetic feller to be—homicidal maniac bent on world conquest, the subjugation of the human race and the instating of mutantkind as rulers of the Earth or just a hero chewin' tobaccy—we'd go and get Maggy a spitoon. And a lobster bib.

7) ROGUE

Are there any characters left in the Marvel Universe that don't have white streaks in their hair? Let's see…there's Nick Fury, Doc Strange, Rogue, X-Man, Reed Rich…uh, wait, the post-Crisis Reed Richards doesn't have it. Umm, let's see, who else…ummm, Robbie Robertson, Count Nefaria…uh, geez, we're tappin' the well somethin' fierce here…um, and…uh, Graviton. Boy, did we fail to make our point here or what? Anyhoo, on to number eight…

8) WITCHBLADE

What if…Alanis Morissette had the Witchblade? Let's see…whoever inspired that "You Oughta Know" song would be hanging inside-out on a lamppost, that agent-fella from "Right Through You" would be found with an Drano enema machine hooked up to his butt and, heck, probably all men everywhere would be found with their privates sewn to their heads. That and, if it's possible, you'd hear a lot more of her on the radio.

9) X-MAN

"Whoa…like, I'm a dimension-displaced mutant with, like, totally gnarly powers. And like, I could use some Visine." Aside from looking like he could use a good slap, X-Man isn't such a bad character. Once you get past his origin. Y'see, an origin is something that can be easily summed up, like being rocketed from an exploding world, or being bitten by a radioactive bug or something. Not being the genetically engineered offspring of an alternate-reality character, as well as based on the child of a mutant and an evil clone of this reality. Otherwise, it makes your head hurt.

10) BLINK

Enough with the nail-biting. It looks like them folks over at Marvel ain't gonna be givin' us any more of Blink, that cute li'l character that bounced around the X-Verse for a while (and the "Age of Apocalypse" universe too). Might be because they killed her during that whole "Generation Next" crossover that introduced Generation X. Ah, well. We're the ones always complaining about how characters never stay dead, so maybe it's better that she stay kaput. Sure was cute, though.

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

SPACE CABBIE

What the hell is this? "Space Cabbie"? Either we're talkin' Jeff Conaway on "Babylon 5" or the writers over at DC had missed their medication when they dreamed this guy up. See, after serving his time as part of Ghengkis VII's pilots in the Bored Wars (a battle we face as we speak), Space Cabbie (Or, if you wanna say it like a Hanna-Barbera cartoon, "Spaaace Cabbieeeee!") decided to take it easy and become a galaxy-hopping cab driver with a nose for adventure and…forget it. We can't finish this write-up. Space Cabbie broke us.

BULL PEN

No One is Safe

Wander the Wizard offices and you'll spot hundreds—nay, *thousands* of different action figures crammed everywhere we can fit 'em (yep, there too). It was on one such desk where the new Kenner 12-inch Luke Skywalker doll, belonging to one Editorial Assistant Matthew Senreich, was sitting, until it just…vanished. Senreich takes us through the harrowing events: "I walked into my office one day and saw a bunch of Post-it notes with arrows on them leading to my computer, where on the monitor was a typed letter that simply read, 'I have Luke.' Over the next few days I'd find an occasional trail of notes leading to an article of Luke's clothing. Eventually I got back all his stuff…but no trace of *him*. I kept thinking my poor Luke was tied up naked somewhere by some evil *Wizard* staffer (though I can't prove it, my money's on Scott Beatty)." So were Matt and his doll ever reunited? "One morning, after getting home really late, I awoke to find my naked Luke basking in all his glory on my windshield. Somebody went to a load of trouble to try and corrupt my doll." So how did the entire sordid incident leave Senreich feeling? "I felt so sorry for Luke—he was so violated—and I don't think he'll be showing up again in this office!"

Lucasfilm was not available for comment.

One of the Damned

Mike Fasolo

Research Assistant, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I write "Picks," "If You Missed" and "Casting Call," help get pictures for the magazine and do some online stuff.

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
"Bullpen."

What surprised you most about the Wizard offices?
That they'd actually want to hire me.

Favorite movie of all time?
"Somewhere in Time," starring Jane Seymour and Christopher Reeve—it's the best tragic love/time travel story ever.

Favorite book of all time?
Lightning, by Dean R. Koontz—yet another fantastic love/time travel story.

Favorite TV shows?
"The X-Files," "ER" and "Star Trek: TNG" reruns.

What hobbies or outside interests do you have?
Stage acting (Yes, I'm a thespian!) and screenwriting.

Who would play you in a movie?
Dean Cameron (Chainsaw in "Summer School").

Favorite comics right now?
Kurt Busiek's Astro City, *Green Lantern* and *Preacher*.

Favorite comics of all time?
Uncanny X-Men #190-#191, in which Kulan Gath took over Manhattan.

What's your main goal in life?
To be rich without having to actually work for it.

What superpower would you want, and why?
I'd like to be able to jump back and forth through time—to see the past and what's going to happen in the future—and immortality would come in handy with that power.

Illustration by Jim Cubby

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 things on Banshee's "to do" list come St. Patty's Day

10. Get blitzed on Jack Daniels, then run around the yard wearing nothing but a shamrock and a smile while beating the bushes for snakes and yelling, "Magically delicious!! Magically %&S@ing delicious!!"
9. Find out why they call my stepbrother "Black Tom."
8. Get into huge fight with Ghost Rider over which is worse: the "having your soul bonded to a vengeance-seeking demon from Hell" curse or the, y'know…Irish curse.
7. Just "doing it."
6. Track down Union Jack, Captain Britain, Baron Blood and every other English super-type I can find and show 'em the neat trick I can do with my shillelagh.
5. Vomit.
4. See how far I can stretch Skin.
3. Force Mondo to touch the Blarney Stone and then go to town!
2. Translate X-Man's origin into Gaelic and see if it makes any sense *that* way.
1. Mistake that li'l green bastard Leech for a leprechaun, tie him to a chair and ask him where he's hidden his gold, popping one of those giant pink zits on Artie's head every time he fails to answer.

CONTEST WINNERS

DAWN, *Wizard* #63: April Sherfey, Sierra Vista, Ariz. And here's April's prize, a page of original art by Joseph Michael Linsner!

STAR WARS, *Wizard* #63: Mike Karsten, Brampton, Ontario, Canada

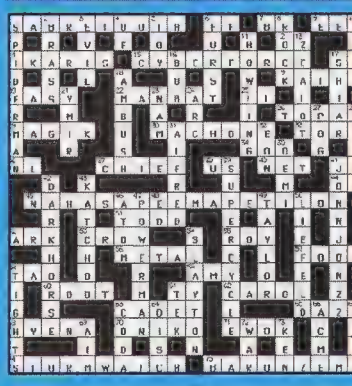
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 202

1. C	5. A	9. B	14. C	18. B
2. A	6. B	10. C	15. A	19. A
3. C	7. C	11. C	16. C	20. D
4. B	8. A	12. A	17. B	

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 203



CHUCK DIXON

GUEST COLUMN

KEEPING A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

I used to date Michelle Pfeiffer back when we were both in high school.

More about that later. First I want to tell you what I see as one of the most aggravating and pervasive trends in comics today.

These days comics *look* terrific. There's an army of great pencilers and inkers at work today. Production is top drawer. And I probably don't have to tell you how far coloring has come along in the past ten years.

But one area lags behind the rest.

The writing.

I could tackle the big picture of how most comic stories are either repetitive tripe or self-aggrandizing nonsense. But there's not enough room here. So I'm going to concentrate on the symptom of this malady that bugs me the most.

I get lots of comics comped to me by the companies I work for and, as I leaf through them each month, I find that only a few have openings interesting enough to make me want to read the rest of the book. The books either begin with a bunch of people I don't know talking about things I could care less about or the first few pages have a bunch of heroes I don't know kicking the ass of a bunch of bad guys I never heard of.

Okay, I'm an old guy out of the loop and I don't understand the significance of Cyberdweeb encountering Fruitwolf for the umpteenth time. But doesn't that put me among the vast majority of literate Americans of all ages who don't read comics? Why should they give a crap if I don't? Is it any wonder sales are flat?

Once upon a time, comic writers and editors understood the importance of grabbing the reader's attention on the first few pages. It was part of the craft like the "page-turn panel" (that's the panel that's supposed to be at the end of each page containing some element that would make you want to turn to the next page). Anything you did was fair play. There's the shock opening: "Jimmy! You killed Superman!" Of course, at the end of the story we discover that it all happened on Earth-2 or some other shameless ploy. But it got you to read the damn book!

There's the "What The Hell?!?" opening which was raised to high art by John Byrne on *Fantastic Four*. On the first page of a hypothetical FF tale, we might discover that the Thing is now the president of the United States and you HAVE to read the rest of the story to find out how this impossible turn of events came to be. Byrne went beyond shameless to audacious. He dared you not to finish the story.

Then there's the "Citizen Kane" opening that coaxes you into the story with images so compelling you're riveted from the first panel. See almost any Spirit story by Will Eisner, *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* #1 by Jim Steranko or *Watchmen* #1 by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons.

There's still a few guys out there who get this very simple idea, but it's lost on most writers freelancing today. Even some of the good ones. Why is this? Maybe it's ignorance. Except for a few masters teaching classes in New York City, there's little or no education available in this field. Maybe it's arrogance. After years of high sales and "preaching to the choir," maybe engaging and entertaining the reader has somehow taken a back-seat to crossovers and licensing deals. Now that enhanced covers have gone the way of the rotary dial phone, it could be time for the enhanced opening.

Don't bother writing me to get a list of the clueless in this area. Just glance at that pile of comics you've been meaning to "get around to" for the last six months, but can't bring yourself to read. You'll find the usual suspects there.

And I really did date Michelle Pfeiffer in high school.

On Earth-2.

An example of how creator John Byrne caught a reader's immediate attention (from *Fantastic Four* #257)

Chuck Dixon, freelance writer, currently scripts Detective Comics, Robin *and a host number of other popular titles.*

WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

STUART IMMONEN

"I meet my deadlines and work well with others," chuckles Stuart Immonen as he describes what has made the penciler/writer a red-hot commodity in the comic book universe. "Luck and timing took care of the rest."

Immonen, 29, is currently capitalizing on his "luck and timing" as an important cog in the groundbreaking new take on DC's *Adventures of Superman*, flying solo on a four-issue *Inferno* mini-series for DC starring the fiery Legion of Super-Heroes character and preparing to fly off to write and draw *Action Comics* sometime in 1997. "I have a definite slant and a heavy dose of melodrama when it comes to doing superheroes," says Immonen of what he describes as a "visual comic book style." "When it comes to doing superheroes, I definitely fit the bill."

Born in Ontario and currently residing in Toronto, Canada, Immonen was a pretty unassuming kid, growing up on a steady diet of Little Lulu and Disney comics. "I was not very popular. I was more interested in reading than going out and playing with other kids. I was the type of kid you would expect to get into comics." A lifelong comic book fan, he didn't get serious about the industry until he bailed on a college career and the fast track to high school art teacher. When a submission to Vortex Comics about his original creation called *Playgrounds* was rejected, Immonen took matters into his own hands and, under his One Horse Lead Works, self-published three issues of *Playgrounds* and a companion book called *Head Cheese* in 1988. Caliber Press picked up *Playgrounds* for one issue before its artist/writer fell under the wing of Revolutionary Press, where he drew rock biographies of such artists as Guns and Roses, Metallica and Prince.

courtesy of Maureen McTigue

Following a brief stopover at Innovation, where he did the never-released adaptation of "The Lawnmower Man" and a couple of issues of *Hero Alliance*, he found some work at Marvel penciling *X-Men* (2nd series) *Annual* #1 and *Wonder Man Annual* #1. Immonen hit the convention circuit for the first time in 1993 and got his foot in the DC door by landing a Martian Manhunter backup story for *Showcase '93* #10. Fill-in duty on *Legion of Super-Heroes* (4th series) #39 turned into a regular gig until #64, when he started on *Adventures of Superman* with issue #520. "Working on Superman under *any* circumstances is a big deal," he says. "Even if I weren't doing a new superpower scenario or a new costume, working on Superman is a real historic occasion for me."

Immonen is not exactly sure if he ultimately fits the profile of comic book creator, but he laughs at just what makes him the ideal candidate to draw the Man of Steel. "I've always had this way of looking at things. I don't know if I'm a freak of nature or not. All I know is that I'm the guy they call."

by Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
It was a Carl Barks-drawn *Uncle Scrooge* book. I liked everything about Barks.

Favorite comic of all time...
Amazing Spider-Man #110. That was the first superhero comic I ever read.

Favorite work of your own...
Showcase '96 #12 (the Sarge Steel/King Faraday story)

Comics you read...
Ranma 1/2, Maison Ikkoku, Legion of Super-Heroes

The one person you'd like to meet...
The science-fiction writer Iain Banks

Superpower you would most want...
The ability to stop time for other people.

Favorite munchies at 2 a.m....
Peanuts and the World Wide Web

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
Legos and Legos

Things you collect...
Comic books from foreign countries

Favorite cartoon...
"Superman"

Person you would most like to work with...
Iain Banks

Favorite TV show...
"The Antiques Road Show"

Last good movie you saw...
"Party Girl"

Last good book you read...
Whit, by Iain Banks

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd definitely like to travel back in time.

W

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Flying
Attacking does not cause Archangel to tap.

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